

Tuesday May 12 1998

Abkhaz D 8.50	Albania D 8.50	Algeria D 8.50	Andorra D 8.50	Angola D 8.50	Antigua D 8.50	Argentina D 8.50	Australia D 8.50	Austria D 8.50	Bahamas D 8.50	Bahrain D 8.50	Barbados D 8.50	Belize D 8.50	Bermuda D 8.50	Bhutan D 8.50	Bolivia D 8.50	Bosnia D 8.50	Botswana D 8.50	Brazil D 8.50	Bulgaria D 8.50	Burkina Faso D 8.50	Burundi D 8.50	Cambodia D 8.50	Cameroon D 8.50	Canada D 8.50	Cape Verde D 8.50	Cayman D 8.50	Central Bank D 8.50	Chad D 8.50	Chile D 8.50	China D 8.50	Cyprus D 8.50	Czech D 8.50	Dominica D 8.50	Dominican D 8.50	DRC D 8.50	Ecuador D 8.50	Egypt D 8.50	El Salvador D 8.50	Equatorial Guinea D 8.50	Eritrea D 8.50	Estonia D 8.50	Ethiopia D 8.50	Fiji D 8.50	Finland D 8.50	France D 8.50	Gabon D 8.50	Gambia D 8.50	Georgia D 8.50	Germany D 8.50	Ghana D 8.50	Greece D 8.50	Guatemala D 8.50	Honduras D 8.50	Hong Kong D 8.50	Hungary D 8.50	Iceland D 8.50	India D 8.50	Indonesia D 8.50	Israel D 8.50	Italy D 8.50	Jamaica D 8.50	Japan D 8.50	Jordan D 8.50	Kazakhstan D 8.50	Kenya D 8.50	Korea D 8.50	Kuwait D 8.50	Latvia D 8.50	Lebanon D 8.50	Lesotho D 8.50	Lithuania D 8.50	Malawi D 8.50	Malaysia D 8.50	Maldives D 8.50	Mali D 8.50	Malta D 8.50	Mexico D 8.50	Moldova D 8.50	Morocco D 8.50	Mozambique D 8.50	Nicaragua D 8.50	Netherlands D 8.50	Niger D 8.50	Nigeria D 8.50	North Macedonia D 8.50	Norway D 8.50	Oman D 8.50	Pakistan D 8.50	Panama D 8.50	Papua New Guinea D 8.50	Paraguay D 8.50	Peru D 8.50	Philippines D 8.50	Poland D 8.50	Portugal D 8.50	Romania D 8.50	Russia D 8.50	Saudi Arabia D 8.50	Senegal D 8.50	Seychelles D 8.50	Sierra Leone D 8.50	Singapore D 8.50	Slovakia D 8.50	Slovenia D 8.50	South Africa D 8.50	South Korea D 8.50	Spain D 8.50	Sri Lanka D 8.50	St Kitts D 8.50	St Lucia D 8.50	St Vincent D 8.50	Sweden D 8.50	Switzerland D 8.50	Taiwan D 8.50	Tanzania D 8.50	Thailand D 8.50	Togo D 8.50	Tonga D 8.50	Trinidad D 8.50	Tunisia D 8.50	Turkey D 8.50	Turkmenistan D 8.50	Uganda D 8.50	Ukraine D 8.50	United Arab Emirates D 8.50	United Kingdom D 8.50	United States D 8.50	Uruguay D 8.50	USA D 8.50	Uzbekistan D 8.50	Venezuela D 8.50	Vietnam D 8.50	Yemen D 8.50	Zambia D 8.50	Zimbabwe D 8.50
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NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

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G2 pages 8-9



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G2 pages 12-13

Debt: MPs demand action



THE NEW SLAVERY

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

LADING Western countries are severely criticised for lack of speed and political will in dealing with the debt crisis engulfing the world's poorest countries, according to a scathing Commons select committee report obtained by the Guardian.

The influential International Development Committee, whose six-month investigation into the debt crisis is to be published on Thursday, describes as "slow and inadequate" the initiative proudly launched by Western countries two years ago to help the most heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC).

The cross-party committee took evidence from the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, and the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, as well as from civil servants and aid agencies such as Oxfam.

Although the leaked 33-page report backs the efforts of Mr Brown and Ms Short in trying to get Germany, Japan and other wealthy countries to do their part, the MPs take a side-swipe at the pair. Unimpressed with promises to increase the British aid budget, the MPs demand that Mr Brown and Ms Short set a deadline for meeting the UN aid target.

The Government has pledged to increase its aid contribution from 0.27 per cent of the total national income, £22 billion, to 0.7 per cent, the UN target, which at present would amount to £55 billion, but has avoided setting a timetable. GDP at present is £200 billion.

The committee, which includes Labour MPs Bernie Grant and Oona King, the Liberal Democrat Jenny Tongue, and Conservative Bowden Wells, its chairman, visited Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda in February and March as part of its investigation.

The MPs describe the HIPC debt relief programme as flawed and having "serious shortfalls". They urge a series of reforms aimed at faster help for the poorest countries, mainly located in sub-Saharan Africa.

One of these councillors lost their job due to dress sense. Guess which one

Sandline 'had FO warning over arms'



Style council... Pam Birchall takes over as mayor from Armand Watts, who resigned rather than abandon his wardrobe

How power dresser Pam became mayor

Rory Carroll

IN THE intoxicating days of election victory it seemed right to pass the torch to young people. The future shimmered with renewal, energy, daring, tough choices.

Colleagues were unmoved by pleas from 29-year-old Armand Watts that his attire had fancy labels such as Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren and Nike. Voters in Chepstow, on the Welsh border, they decided, would settle for nothing less than a mayor in a sober three-piece suit.

"This is a step back into the dark ages of politics. I really don't see the point in wearing a suit, shirt and tie to sit around in council meetings," said Mr Watts, a Blairite and a hairdresser. He yesterday wore white Levi cords, Nike air rift trainers and a red Versace tank top.

"All the councillors know each other and although the meetings are public, they are so boring that no one else attends. I don't think they liked my hair either. It's a bit like Gaultier, short back and sides with a French crop."

"I admit I'm old fashioned but some of the clothes Armand wears are just not right. In the chamber I like shirts. I don't like T-shirts and tank tops and I certainly don't like shorts."

Lucy Ward, Richard Norton-Taylor and Ed O'Loughlin in Johannesburg

FOREIGN Office officials specifically warned Sandline not to breach the UN embargo on arms sales to Sierra Leone in secret talks with the mercenary company earlier this year, a cabinet source told the Guardian last night.

Officials were said to have acted "quite properly" in their dealings with the company. The latest claim came on a day when, in a significant change of tack, Tony Blair switched the focus from prior FO knowledge of Sandline's intervention in the counter coup to the fact that Britain helped restore an elected regime.

By claiming that Sandline was specifically warned not to transgress the UN edict, the Government is shifting the blame away from officials and ministers and on to the company — even if mistakes were made in Whitehall.



The Sandline affair, page 11; Hugo Young, page 8; Letters, page 9

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Sketch

Getting away with Murdoch



Simon Hoggart

THE Rupert Murdoch (Protection) Bill got its second reading in the Commons yesterday. Not that anyone calls the measure anything so crude. Instead it is dubbed the Competition Bill, or as Margaret Beckett called it, "a bill for business, for consumers and for jobs" (An interesting New Labour order of priorities there).

The bill started its life in the House of Lords, where the peers inserted an amendment that would prevent "predatory pricing" of newspapers, something Mr Murdoch periodically does in the hopes of driving his competitors out of business. Now and again the price of the Times dives to 10p, though even then it is not such good value as the Guardian.

(This is proof that intolerable sycophancy and greasing is not confined to the Chamber of the House of Commons. We Guardian Guys could be a rival to the Blair Babes.)

Mrs Beckett's view is that you cannot legislate against this even if you wanted to. Newspapers are forever making special offers or giving away goodies with the paper. All you would be doing, the President of the Board of Trade said, is freezing the newspaper industry in its present state, with no paper allowed to gain readers or even to start up from scratch.

Plenty of Labour MPs disagreed. Chris Mullin wanted a promise that, if there was a case of "clear and gross" abuse in the newspaper business, then the Government would have to go "back to the drawing board" to sort it all

out. He meant the Times. Mrs Beckett made a puzzling reply. "Parliament has decided," she declared, "that it is illegal for one person to murder another."

What was she on about? I'm sure Mr Mullin dislikes Rupert Murdoch as much as the next Old Labour MP, but he hadn't actually called for him to be garroted by trained assassins.

She continued, "But you cannot say to a minister that, because murder is illegal, and you believe that a certain person is guilty of murder, the minister should give you an assurance that the person will be charged and punished for murder."

Ah! It was almost possible to work out what she meant. You couldn't single out Mr Murdoch. (I attended the same party as Mr Murdoch the other day. It was in the London Aquarium. The sharks looked at the great publisher, but he avoided looking at the sharks.)

Later Martin Bell, who sounds more wary and embittered every time he speaks, made the shortest speech of the afternoon. The clause did not make some general point, he said — "it is very much about Mr Murdoch". Mr Murdoch had built up a huge reserve of money, with which he could support predatory pricing, by being given a near monopoly on cable and satellite broadcasting.

Favours were sought. Favours were given. Telephone calls were exchanged. There was a culture of greed in the body politic and the people dealt with that at the last election.

"There is a culture of greed in the newspaper industry. I believe that we can end it, and the people who sent us here demand that we should," Mr Bell sounds like a hermit, emerging from his cave to appall himself again by the venality and the vanity he sees all around him. Now if Alamy & Whalley can come up with a nice sackcloth and ash suit in white, he'll be kitted out perfectly.

Review

Give this show the axe, Eugene

Andrew Clements

Eugene O'Neill

Opera North, Leeds

IT IS quite an achievement to stage Eugene O'Neill in a way that leaves the audience neither shamed nor stirred, but Opera North's new production manages just that.

With one shining exception, the ingredients poured into Dalia Ibelhauptaite's meagre show provide only the sketchiest outlines of the emotional twists and tensions that course through Tchekhovsky's masterpiece.

The bright spot is the conducting, with the company's music director-designate Steven Sloane (who will take up his post in autumn 1999) working hard to provide some of the dramatic credibility lacking elsewhere. In the Letter Scene, he had to take responsibility for generating all the passion and youthful impetuosity, and in the final act, after giving verve and lift to the dully choreographed dances at the St Petersburg Ball, paced the final confrontation so that, orchestrally at least, it suggested genuine tragedy.

The playing — full-blooded and rich-toned, woodwind solos lyrically acute — signalled that the Opera North band already relish the prospect of partnership with their new boss. But it was an uphill struggle for Sloane, for he was working with singers who, all

too often, seemed vocally at odds with their roles and who had been given precious little directorial help: crucial weaknesses that went to the heart of the opera.

Alwynn Mellor, as Tatiana, seemed a shadow of her usual self in a role she had previously sung for Welsh National Opera. The middle registers of her voice lacked body, the top was approximate, while she cut a miserable figure on stage, never hinting at any development in a character who matures from an adolescent girl, in love with the idea of being in love, to a woman aware of her responsibilities. Given Peter Savidge's stiff, uncharismatic O'Neill, got up to look far too old, the final scene never had a hope of catching fire, for all Sloane's efforts.

Paul Nilon's Lensky at least gave the impression of believing in his role, and Norman Bailey turned in an intelligent cameo as Gromov — not much voice, but bags of stagecraft. Giles Cudde's set is frugal, and its one idea — a Magritte-like skyscape that shifts around the stage from scene to scene — is baffling rather than intriguing. Like so much else in the production, it seems too generalised, and what few ideas Ibelhauptaite comes up with — turning Monsieur Triquet into a party conjuror, having Gromov appear to court O'Neill at the final curtain — reveal no perceptions. It is all sadly, desperately dull.

Condemnation from Pakistan as neighbour and arch enemy openly declares weapons capacity

Fury at Indian nuclear test

Ben Black in London and M. K. Narayan in New Delhi

INDIA stunned the world — and its Asian neighbours in particular — yesterday by conducting its first nuclear test for 34 years, coming out of the closet to declare openly that it now has the capacity to produce weapons.

In a move that came as a blow both to regional stability and international efforts to promote non-proliferation, the government in New Delhi said its underground blasts established that it had "proven capability" for a weapons programme.

But even as India held out the prospect that it would now work for disarmament, there were fears that yesterday's action would trigger testing by fellow nuclear

"threshold" state Pakistan and by China, which with the world's four other "official" nuclear powers has signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. International concern registered in the form of a formal protest from the United States, and "disarray" from the European Union. Both will want to explore the prospects for persuading India from conducting any further tests and turning yesterday's bad news into something more positive in the longer term.

India, Pakistan and Israel were widely suspected of nuclear capability and have not joined the 1970 nuclear non-proliferation treaty, which is observed by 136 countries.

Pakistan yesterday lambasted its arch enemy. The foreign minister, Gohar Ayub Khan, said: "Pakistan strongly condemns this Indian act and the entire world

should condemn it. Pakistan's defence will be made impregnable against any Indian threat, be it nuclear or conventional."

And more explicitly, a former Pakistani intelligence chief, retired general Hamid Gul, said in Islamabad that Pakistan should immediately demonstrate its own nuclear capability.

India's three blasts were conducted in Pokhran, an uninhabited area east of the city of Jaipur and about 60 miles south of the border with Pakistan. Pokhran was the site of India's only previous test on May 18 1974.

In a brief statement the prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, said scientists had tested a fission device, a low-yield device and a thermonuclear device.

The White House press secretary, Mike McCurry, said

the US was "deeply disappointed" by India's decision and said it ran counter to the efforts to promulgate a comprehensive ban.

US officials were exploring whether sanctions could be imposed and whether President Clinton's planned visit later this year would go ahead.

The US has long considered south Asia a likely region for nuclear conflict given the historic tensions between India and Pakistan, which have worsened recently because of the arms race.

But India's Hindu nationalist government received the unexpected backing of even its most ardent critics at home, indicating a national consensus over the country's nuclear status.

The main opposition Congress Party said in a statement that it congratulated In-

dian scientists "for this successful scientific experiment which demonstrates India's technological advance."

"This is the logical culmination of a process initiated by Indira Gandhi in 1974," it said.

Kushabhau Thakre, president of the prime minister's Bharatiya Janata Party, said: "It is a reassertion of our sovereign right to decide for ourselves how best it meets our security concerns and it is a repudiation of the policy of nuclear apartheid that the West sought to impose on us."

P. K. Iyengar, a former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, said India should now be regarded on a level with the world's five leading nuclear states.

"If India is accepted politically as a nuclear weapon state, then it could assume more responsibility in the nuclear disarmament issue. The

tests are a positive proof of India being a nuclear weapon country and no one can deny it," he said.

The New Delhi government later said that the tests showed India "has a proven capability for a weaponised nuclear programme."

"These tests provide reassurance to the people of India that their national security interests are paramount and will be promoted and protected."

In the past India would not even use the term "weapon" when referring to its nuclear programme, although it was widely believed to be trying to develop a bomb. It argued that it needed to keep its option open because Pakistan and China had the capability to develop nuclear weapons.

Seed of hope, page 7; Leader comment, page 9

Hidden treasure

Rare moss clings on to a low profile

Martin Wainwright investigates

BRITAIN'S rarest patch of moss was discreetly introduced to the world yesterday, with visitors sworn to secrecy and taken in blindfolds to its home in a Derbyshire ravine.

Heart-searching by English Nature led to the decision to twitch the curtain briefly on the world's only clump of *Thamnobryum otagoense*, hidden by a waterfall in a cave entrance at the bottom of a muddy precipice.

"We have discussed it long and hard, but we are a publicly funded body and people have the right to know it's here," said Ben Le Bas, leading the way through swaths of wild garlic. On the lip of the waterfall, just showing its fragile leaves through the spray, the moss was duly clinging to its sole toehold on earth, less than four square feet of eroded limestone. Thought

The moss *Thamnobryum otagoense* at its secret location, hidden by a waterfall in a cave entrance in the Peak District

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS THOMSON

to have adapted from a neighbouring colony of the relatively common *Thamnobryum otagoense*, which cannot survive under the waterfall, the moss's distinctively slender fronds were discovered in 1905.

But the site has remained a well-kept secret, particularly after several scientific surveys failed to discover any other colonies, even under other waterfalls in

the ravine. "There are two almost equally small clumps of closely related species in Madeira and North Yorkshire," said Mr Le Bas, site manager for English Nature in the Peak national park.

"But no more, anywhere, of *otagoense*. So we are dealing with something needing the highest levels of protection."

Publicising the moss's

vulnerability, though not its exact site, is also aimed at alerting climbers and hikers of the need for extreme care in the Derbyshire Dales national nature reserve, one of the five most visited in Britain. The reserve's "honeypot" section, Lathkill Dale, alone receives 100,000 visitors annually, to see more obvious rarities such as the Nottingham Catchfly and

Jacob's Ladder plants. Ramblers who lit a picnic fire in a drought two years ago unwittingly destroyed 10 per cent of the *Thamnobryum* colony, triggering discussions that led to yesterday's one-off tour.

For those who stumble by chance on the cave, which lies well off footpaths and involves fording the ravine's stream, discreet notice has also been fixed

warning that "a plant which grows nowhere else in the world" is in the vicinity and appealing for extreme care.

Otherwise, Mr Le Bas said, botanical guides will indicate the moss only by hatching a 10-mile-square block on the map between Matlock and Bakewell. Regular checks will meanwhile monitor the moss's wellbeing.

BBC sacks 'voice of swimming' over bribes claim

Commentator denies wrongdoing after solicitors' damning criticism

John Duncan

Sports Correspondent

HAMILTON BLAND, the BBC's voice of swimming since 1973, has been sacked by the corporation. A damning independent report, commissioned by the Amateur Swimming Association, claimed that he took bribes to recommend products to local authorities which he was supposed to be an independent adviser. The report has been passed to police. Mr Bland has denied any wrongdoing.

A BBC statement said: "In the light of the report into Hamilton Bland's activities, and the Amateur Swimming Association's decision to have no more dealings with him, the BBC has decided it would be inappropriate to employ Mr Bland as a swimming commentator."

Mr Bland was also employed as facilities consultant for the ASA. He was yesterday sacked from that position. He was found by the report, prepared by solicitors Herbert Smith, to have made a secret agreement with Han

Moyer of Poly Pool Floors. Under the deal, Mr Bland would receive 5 per cent commission for recommending Mr Moyer's moveable floors — which alter the depth of swimming pools — to local authorities seeking his advice. None of them were to be told of Mr Bland's relationship with Poly Pool Floors.

In one case, Mr Bland was paid £10,000 to act as a consultant on a proposed swimming pool to whom he recommended Poly Pool. At the same time, the report claims he was suggesting to Mr Moyer that he should bump up the price of the work requested and the pair could split the difference between them. The project never got

beyond the planning stage. "Hamilton Bland was in a position of trust and influence, a position he has clearly abused," said the ASA chief executive, David Sparkes. "Mr Bland has betrayed the trust that both we and our partners put in him. We had no alternative but to relieve him of all his duties with the ASA."

Mr Bland said in a statement issued through solicitors Olswang: "I have served the ASA faithfully and diligently, acting in its best interests at all times. I absolutely deny that I have brought the ASA or myself into disrepute."

But while the ASA tries to rebuild public confidence in its organisation there was embarrassing evidence of how lax it

had been in monitoring or controlling Mr Bland's activities. "The report found that there was 'too wrongdoing' by Mr Bland in the administration of the ASA Awards Scheme, a major source of revenue for the association, but there was criticism of the amount Mr Bland took as promoter. In 1995/96 the scheme produced £779,000 net for the ASA, and Mr Bland received £32,228. He also employed his wife on the scheme, with ASA approval, at £13,350, and charged the ASA £8,000 for the use of his home."

"I believe the public will be, quite rightly, shocked at how much income he derives from the awards scheme," said the report's author, Mark Gay.



Hamilton Bland... sacked by the BBC and the ASA

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Beckett

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I don't be rich that Os in beds Unda G

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Change of plea over stolen £650,000 Picasso

'Likeable rogue' repents his sins

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

A "GENTLEMAN thief" accused of handling a stolen Picasso yesterday changed his plea to guilty, for "moral, intellectual and spiritual" reasons. He was warned by the judge that he faced a substantial prison sentence.

Peter Scott, aged 67, of Islington in north London, had originally denied conspiring to handle the Picasso, *Tête de Femme*, which was stolen from the Lefevre gallery in Mayfair in March last year.

He had claimed at his trial last week that he had not known that the £650,000 painting was inside a suitcase given him by a young man he regarded as a son.

Yesterday at Snaresbrook crown court in east London, his counsel, Helen McCormack, said her client had "considered his position" over the weekend.

Detail of *Tête de Femme* by Pablo Picasso

Judge Andrew Brooks, then apologised to the jury for not having experienced "the genuine article" of a full trial.

He warned Scott he had been convicted of a "very grave and serious matter". Ms McCormack said that her client had instructed her not to offer pleas in mitigation.

Scott will be sentenced at a later date along with his co-accused, Ronald Spring, a former lawyer who helped police to trap Scott and who had pleaded guilty to a part in the plot.

During the five-day hearing, the jury had heard that the painting had been stolen from the wall of the gallery by a robber who escaped in a taxi. Police from the South-east regional crime squad (now the National Crime Squad) had later lain in wait for Scott at a rendezvous with Spring at the Sherlock Holmes hotel in central London.

Giving evidence last week, Scott told the jury that a young man, who cannot be named for legal reasons, had given him a case and said there was a painting inside, but had not told him it was stolen. He admitted in evidence that he must seem like a "master-idiot" rather than the master-criminal he was accused of being.

Outside court, Scott, who was granted bail while await-

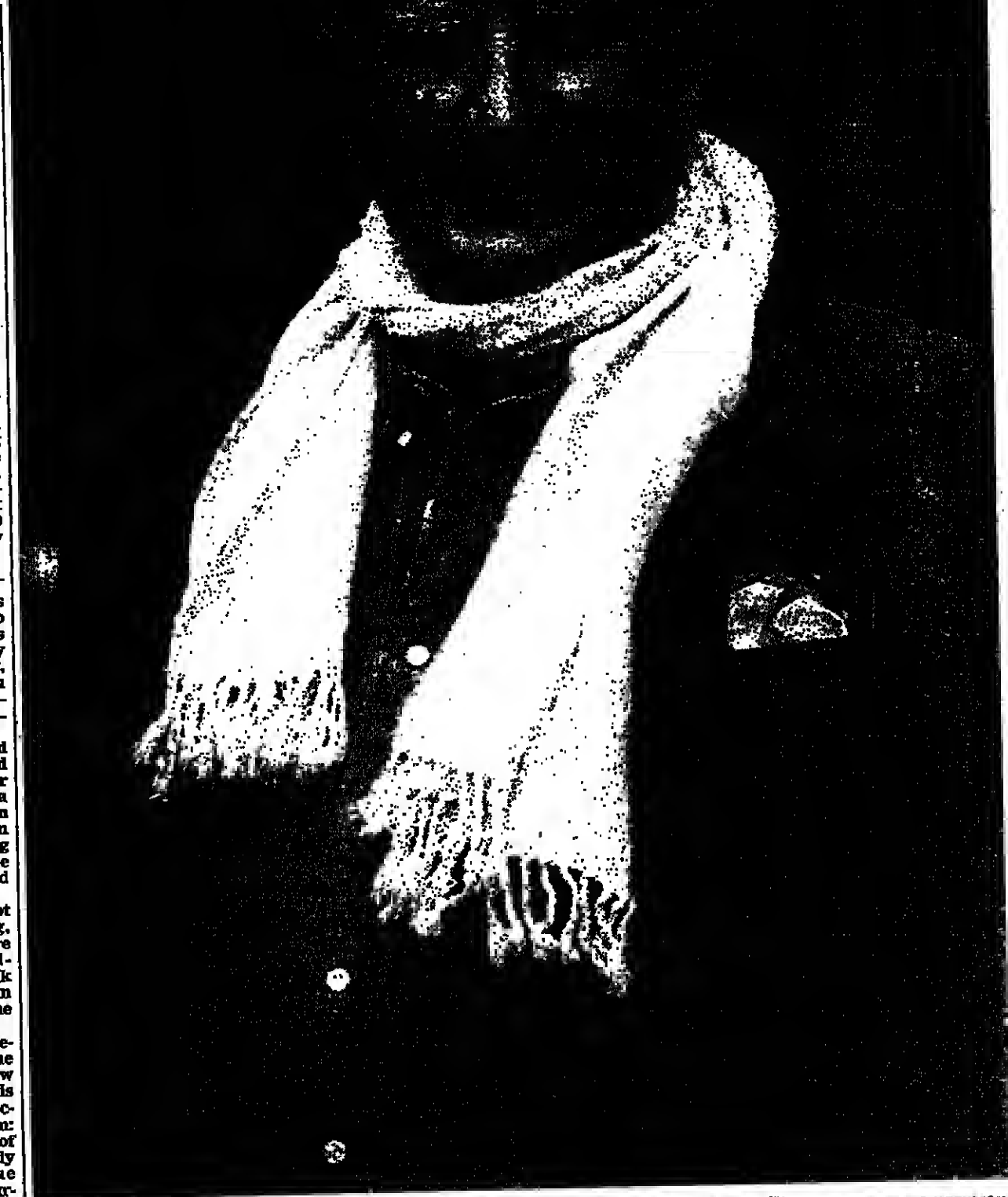
ing sentence, said he changed his plea after being impressed by the cross-examination of crown counsel Andrew Campbell last Friday.

On one occasion he had congratulated Mr Campbell for a perceptive question and told him: "you should have been a 'crim'."

Scott said: "I felt I could no longer defend my position morally, intellectually or spiritually. I have made an error of judgment, and I'm ready and willing to pay the price." He felt he had been a victim of circumstances.

One investigating officer, Detective Constable Andrew Kennedy, said that he had been surprised by the change of plea, adding: "He's a likeable rogue, but a rogue nonetheless."

Scott, who had arrived with his toothbrush and a bag ready to go to prison, said he had gone straight for 10 years. He had made a foolish mistake, he said, but he did not want to contaminate the 10 years by continuing to deny his crime.



Peter Scott outside court in his trademark white silk scarf, before changing his plea to guilty PHOTOGRAPH: STEFAN ROUSSEAU

Gentleman thief must now contemplate exchanging his retired life of pleasure for that of Her Majesty's

Duncan Campbell
on a life of crime

A MESSAGE left on Peter Scott's answerphone at his council flat in Islington, north London, at the weekend was explicit: "If I'm not here, it's because I'm in prison. I won't be able to get back to you."

In the event, he was not in prison last night but on bail pending sentence. But the "king of the cat burglars" is an old enough hand to know that his 10 years of pleasure



Sophia Loren put spell on Scott for theft of necklace

as a free man is about to be exchanged for that of Her Majesty's.

Following the death last year of his mentor, George "Fats" Chatham, Peter Gullston Scott has been Britain's best-known thief. He recounted his exploits in *Gentleman Thief*, published in 1995 with a prophetic cover of a thief's arm around a stolen painting. His story had already been the subject of a film in the

1960s, starring Tom Bell. Most famously, he stole Sophia Loren's £200,000 necklace while she was in England filming *The Millionaire* in 1960. She went on TV to put a gypsy spell on the unknown thief which, Scott ruefully concedes, was highly effective.

Born in Belfast, he attended school with the former BBC journalist John Cole, whom he remembered as a prefect warning him, in vain, of the path he was taking.

In a criminal career that began in 1950, he spent 12 years in jail. He disliked violence; though he was once convicted for breaking a policeman's nose as he tried to escape. He was given, he told the court, a "good beating" in return.

His final conviction had been for burglary in 1986, and since his release in 1987 he had been out of trouble, earning a living coaching tennis in Regent's Park, knocking balls around with the likes of the businessman Ralph Halpern. Having spent a fortune, he had "grown to enjoy poverty" and travelled London on a bicycle.

But his path was to cross those of two others and to lead him into the dock this week. One was an elderly bent lawyer, Ron Spring, whom Scott had met when he handled his divorce — "and handled it badly" — some 30 years previously.

The other was a troubled young man whom he had coached at tennis and for whom he had acted as a father. The latter gave him the suitcase with the stolen Picasso in it. But Spring had been rumoured by the police, and duly helped them catch Scott.

Scott said he could not feel angry with Spring, with whom he used to share cream cakes and sandwiches at the Sherlock Holmes hotel. "He's an elderly, weak, sad man," he said in court.

"I was poaching excitement," said Scott after the case. The poacher has now held his hands up. After his arrest he quoted to detectives the W E Henley poem: "Under the bludgeonings of chance, my head is bloody but unbowed." Now he must wait to see what further bludgeonings chance has in store.

Video replays helicopter crash

Pilot is accused over death of boy passenger at charity event

A N AMATEUR video was shown to a jury yesterday on the first day of the trial of a pilot whose helicopter crashed and killed a schoolboy passenger.

Bob Hobson, aged 56, of Howgate near Edinburgh, denies contravening two air regulations by allowing six people on one flight instead of the regulation five.

Hobson, described to Forfar sheriff court as an experienced pilot, is also charged with negligence by taking off and flying when visibility was restricted due to misting of the helicopter's windows, causing it to collide with fences on farmland.

The crash happened at Glamis castle in Angus last July during an event organised by TV presenter Noel Edmonds's charity, Airborne. The aircraft belonged to the owner of the Kwik-Fit chain, Sir Tom Farmer.

Garry Malley, aged nine, from Dundee, was killed instantly when it crashed in a field less than a mile from the castle; it had been his first time in a helicopter. Three other children were injured in the crash.

A home video taken by Elizabeth Jones, a mother of one of the injured children, was shown to the court on several TV screens. It showed the

children being loaded into the helicopter moments before it was to take off. Within minutes of the children and the pilot entering the aircraft, the windscreen appeared to mist over.

One person could clearly be seen wiping the glass at the front and as the engine was wound up, a second person began to wipe the windscreen from the inside.

Moments before the video was shown, the mother of Garry Malley left the courtroom, unable to watch the scenes.

The jury was told the video camera had been switched off for a while. When it resumed, the helicopter was a few feet from the ground. As it lifted off with the children on board, cheers could be heard from the ground.

The dark blue aircraft with the logo Kwik-Fit Flyer on the side then flew at quite a low height a short distance away.

A separate film taken by police a short time after the crash showed the wreckage of the helicopter on its side in a field.

The tail end and the rotor blades appeared to have broken off and were strewn with other debris over a wide area. Close-up shots inside the cockpit showed extensive damage to the nose and clumps of mud and grass could be seen caught up in the wreckage.

Earlier, the jury was shown photographs taken by police. Several showed a damaged fence and tracks in the mud leading from the fence to the fuselage of the helicopter.

The trial continues.

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مكتبة الامم

Britain urged to make a grand gesture □ Defence exports continue to pose ethical dilemma

Write off debt, say agencies

Swen MacAskill, David Pallister and Richard Norton-Taylor

AID agencies are putting pressure on the Government to make a magnanimous gesture to mark the millennium by writing off all debt owed by the world's poorest countries.

They want Britain to act unilaterally in the hope of shaming other countries, primarily Germany and Japan, into action.

Britain is owed about \$10 billion worldwide but the aid agencies estimate that to write off the debts of the poorest countries would cost only about \$2.5 billion. This still sounds daunting, but the agencies put it into proportion, pointing out that much more is spent each year on trainers, cigarettes, or concert tickets. The favourite comparison by one of the campaigners, Christian Aid, is with the amount spent on National Lottery scratchcards: \$3.1 billion since it was launched.

The UK is the sixth largest creditor to the most heavily indebted poor countries. The loans were either given multilaterally, through bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, or

bilaterally, directly from governments. British bilateral aid to the poorest countries amounts to £1.5 billion.

A small portion of this, about 2 per cent, is owed to Clare Short's International Development Department and the remainder to the Export Credits Guarantee Department, which is answerable to Margaret Beckett's Department of Trade and Industry.

Ms Short's department confirmed yesterday that only \$167 million in debt was outstanding. Although aid agencies have put the figure much higher, a spokesman for Ms Short said the new figure did not include \$40 million that had been cancelled in the last six months, while a further \$130 million was to be cancelled.

The cancellations are partly because Ms Shortland Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, have a long-standing interest in Third World campaigning. They are building on a base established by the Conservatives, especially the former chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, who made a sustained argument in favour of debt relief. But much of the debt owed to the ECOD is related to arms sales. Britain is the third largest exporter of weapons, and over the past 10 years more than a quarter of the UK's debts have come from arms supply.



FOREIGN debt is crippling parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America: 21 million children will die because of debt. Millions more will grow up unable to read or write as government budgets for health and education are dwarfed by debt repayments to the West.

This week the Guardian explores the inherent instability and injustice of economic globalisation and the enormous human costs. We turn the spotlight on some of the poorest, most neglected countries in the world.

The Guardian is backing the Jubilee 2000 coalition of more than 70 aid agencies, trade unions and churches. We are calling on the G8 leaders meeting this weekend in Birmingham to relieve them of debt burden. Existing provision is too little and too slow. Debt cannot be left to the bankers and the economists: it needs a mass campaign. It's time to break the chain. This is not about charity, this is about justice. At the end of the 20th century, it is New Slavery.

lution do not have access to sanitation. (The delivery of a new batch of 16 Hawks is due to begin this month.)

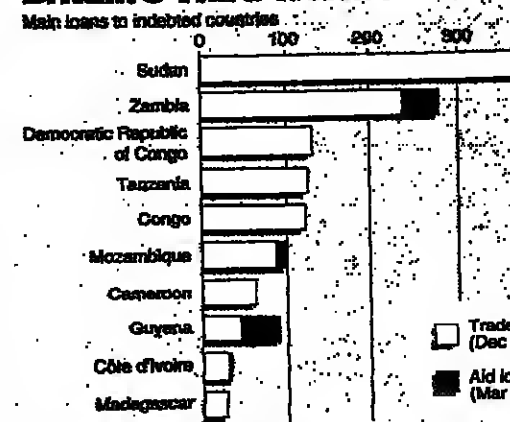
Brutal and corrupt Indonesia is emerging as the ECOD's biggest new market. It owes Britain \$1.8 billion, \$800 million of which is for arms.

Politically, unilateral action in cancelling debt to the poorest countries would benefit the Government, and would be especially popular among traditional Labour supporters.

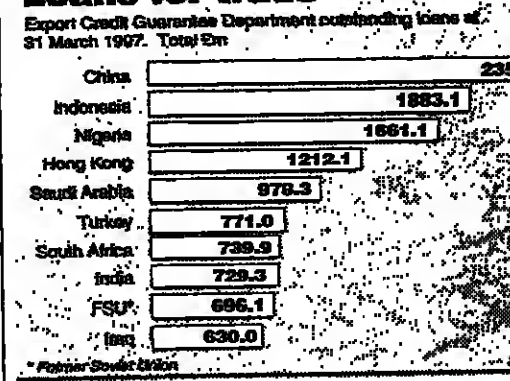
But there are also good arguments against unilateral action. If Britain were to cancel the debts of the poorest countries, it would no longer have a place at the international negotiating table, no longer able to nudge along those countries resistant to acting on debt, as at the Birmingham summit.

In many ways, unilateral cancellation would be the easy option. It would not cost the Treasury that much to write off the debt, partly because much of it is irrecoverable anyway. The political will is there. The question is whether Mr Brown thinks it is better to act unilaterally or work with developed countries to reduce the debt in tandem: grand gesture or pragmatic approach? Though it might not please the aid agencies, it will almost certainly be the latter.

Britain's Third World debtors



Loans for trade



Hard facts

□ Microsoft Corporation makes \$34 million (£20 million) profit a day. This is what sub-Saharan Africa pays each day in debt service (interest and capital repayments).

□ The cost of meeting basic goals in Africa for health, nutrition, education and family planning would be about \$9 billion a year.

□ In 1996, sub-Saharan Africa paid the developed world \$13.4 billion, including \$9.5 billion in new loans and \$2.6 billion of its aid (23 per cent of all grants). So nearly a quarter of aid to Africa simply goes to repay debts.

□ Developing countries paid \$270 billion in debt service last year — \$60 per person. This has risen from \$160 billion in 1990.

□ The £16 billion Britain is spending on 232 new Eurofighters would cancel the entire debt of south Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

□ Sub-Saharan Africa spends \$11.5 per person on health, \$25.3 per person on education and \$22 per person on servicing its debt.

□ Total mortgage debt in Britain is more than £400 billion. This is more than the debt of south and east Asia, including India and China.

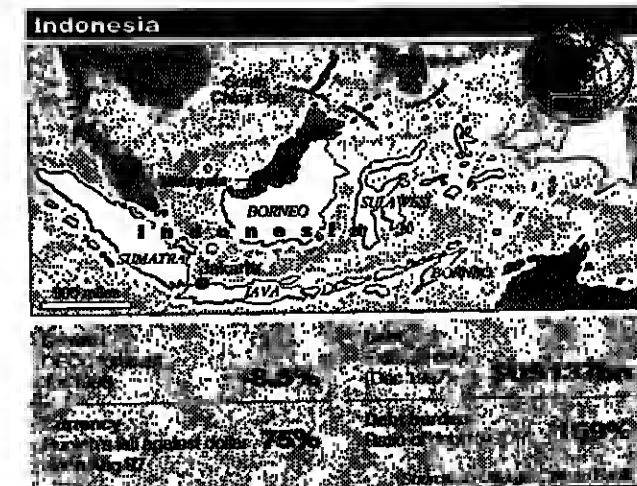
□ In 1990 the number of mothers dying in childbirth was 470 per 100,000 live births. The figure today is 480 deaths per 100,000 live births.

Tomorrow

"THE 34-year-old mother of five lives in one room encased in brick and topped with a corrugated iron roof from which hang plastic bags to catch the rain. She occasionally sells knickknacks by the roadside. The rest of the time she takes care of her family. Palmer's situation is desperate. So is the Jamaican economy's. But, according to the World Bank and the IMF, neither is desperate enough."

— Gary Young reports from Jamaica. Film what the international community is doing to get out of this mess.

Sign the online petition on our website <http://reports.guardian.co.uk/debt>. There you can follow the campaign until 2000 and find out how to take action.



Indonesians feel plenty of pain — but for whose gain?

Andrew Higgins reports from Tangerang, where dollar withdrawal is biting hard

AT THE Mosque of Clear Light an unflinching darkness is gathering. As bankers from New York to Hong Kong fret about getting Indonesia's corporate sector to repay a \$42 billion borrowing binge, Imam Husen is counting ragged notes left in a rusty collection box.

The grand total for the month: 250,000 rupiah — about £16.

"I've never seen anything like this. I can only think of when the Japanese were here [during the second world war]," says the octogenarian former rice farmer turned Islamic counsellor to the shura dwellers of Tangerang, a splintering industrial dynamo of President Suharto's now geriatric New Order.

The Imam's faithful — itinerant workers lured by the prospect of earning 50 per cent a day stitching Nike and Reebok trainers. But they still regard Allah for what many considered good fortune. The mosque's monthly take used to amount to nearly \$200.

Today, even Allah gets short-changed. Financial chaos struck Indonesia in August last year so suddenly and mysteriously that Mr Husen makes no attempt to understand what happened. How to fathom a debacle that surprised Nobel Prize-winning economists, wrong-footed the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and made a fool of so many other experts?

Just last year the British embassy put its name to a business guide praising the country's "very, very sound" economy and telling British firms to "waste no more time in getting started in Indonesia". To about 1,000 worshippers who squeeze into his concrete mosque for Friday prayers, the Imam preaches the more predictable mysteries of Islam.

are being tested. Allah is giving us a test: how strong is our faith? How strong are we?"

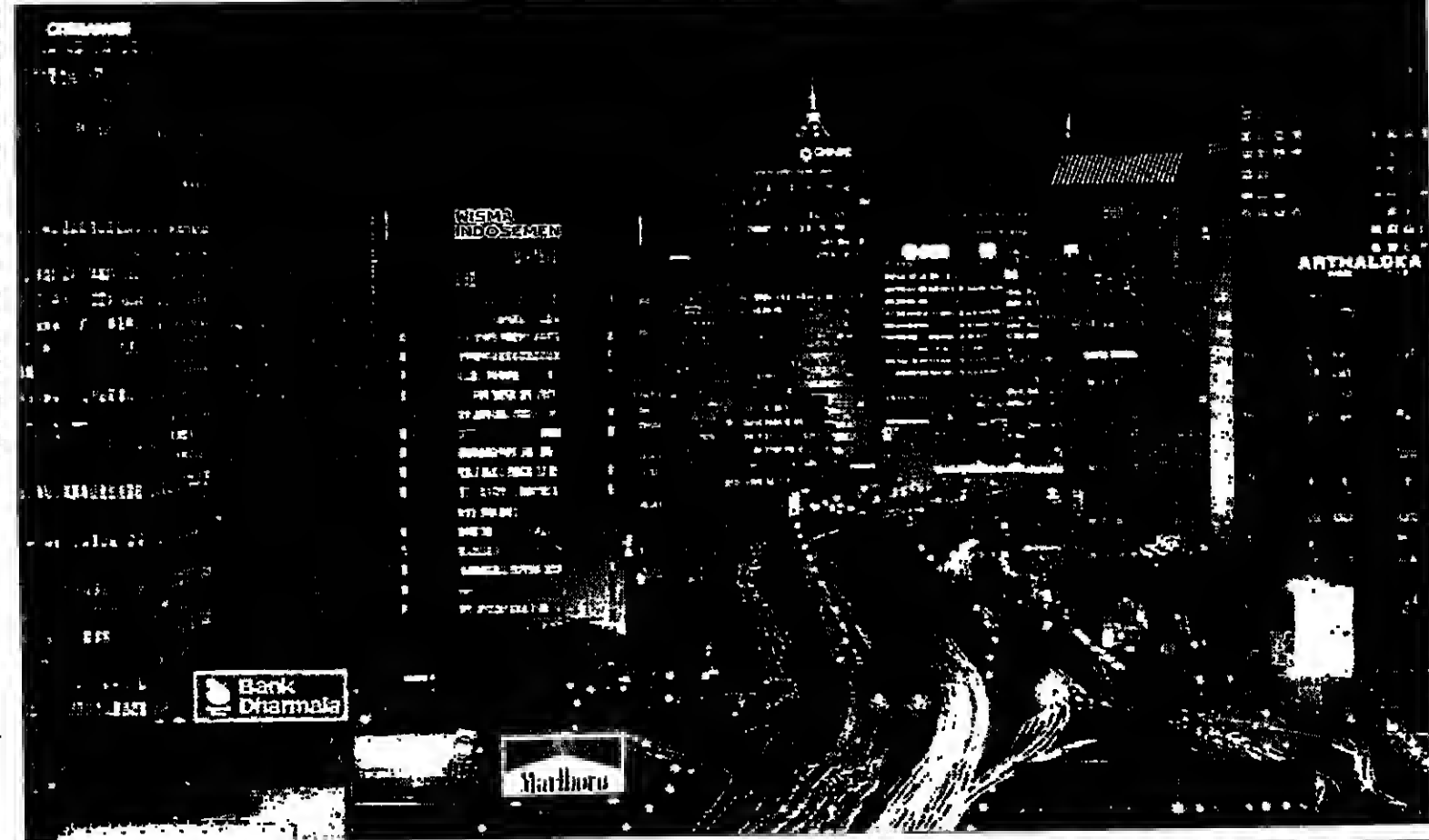
Behind the mosque sprawls a maze of fetid alleys and crumbling shacks. As monsoon rain ricochets off flimsy metal roofs, a drunk staggers through the mud, a knife in one hand, a baby dangling from the other. Nearby, a row of plywood huts stands empty. Labourers who used to sleep there lost their jobs and have retreated to their distant villages. Most leave the way they came — along a shimmering highway built at the height of Indonesia's boom.

Along the road government billboards proclaim: "I love the rupiah."

The message has all the desperation of an alcoholic declaring an insatiable appetite for orange juice. Indonesia, the much of Asia, is addicted to the hard stuff — dollars, yen and pounds. Money from foreign banks and investors helped fund roads, skyscrapers and factories. It paid for imported cotton to supply the textile mills of Tangerang, and for imported soy beans to feed the workers.

But the supply has run dry. Investors have taken flight in the aftermath of the Asian crisis — and foreign bankers want their money back. The IMF says it will provide \$45 billion to help bankrupt companies pay their immediate debts to foreign creditors Nike, but the US firm pulled out late last year.

Ms Niggolan listens to alarming reports of worse to come on a tiny radio, her one indulgence after four years of work. She earns 45p a day. If the causes of the crisis lie beyond comprehension, its consequences reach into the most intimate areas of ordinary life, from what people eat to how they make love.



Double-take on Jakarta, capital city of Indonesia, which is emerging as the ECOD's biggest new market... under a corrupt government, skyscrapers are built for the few, while the many are condemned to live in squalid conditions

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRIS STOWERS (top) and SEAN SPRAQUE

Korean-owned shoemaker. The job means long hours and low pay. What unsettles Ms Niggolan most, though, is a fear of being fired. Her firm has already laid off nearly three-quarters of the workforce. Eagle's clients used to include Nike, but the US firm pulled out late last year.

Ms Niggolan listens to alarming reports of worse to come on a tiny radio, her one indulgence after four years of work. She earns 45p a day. If the causes of the crisis lie beyond comprehension, its consequences reach into the most intimate areas of ordinary life, from what people eat to how they make love.

On paper, virtually every major firm in the area is now bankrupt. More than 10,000 people have been laid off.

The local water company, PDAM Tangerang, is raising the price of tap water by 26 per cent to keep its creditors happy. It owes \$9 million.

The shums housing Tangerang's poorer residents are known as *kampung*, a term originally meaning village but now transplanted to designate urban areas too. The head of Ms Niggolan's *kampung* is Didi Suyati, an earnest 35-year-old whose father held the same position before him. A member of shum "gentry", he has a colour television, a phone and a solid roof.

He has also been entrusted with caring for a trophy won by the local football team. In a cabinet in his front room he keeps what is supposed to be a record of the population. It lists names, addresses and places of work. The system has broken down.

He cheers their departure. Now they are somebody else's problem. A government banner strung outside his home warns against "rumours that place the nation at harm" and denounces calls for strikes and protests. But the biggest deterrent against militancy is the threat of unemployment.

President Suharto, his family and their cronies made billions out of the government. Serving the state is far less lucrative in the *kampung*. Mr Suyati used to make a few pounds issuing documents to workers starting new jobs. Such paperwork is now redundant: nobody is getting a new job. He feeds his family by working as a security guard.

But like nearly everyone else they ran out of money. Only 20 bousss were finished. Three are occupied. Marooned in an expense of mud, they stand as relics of Indonesia's lost middle-class dream — a fantasy that floated briefly into view on a cushion of easy credit only to collapse in a pile of bad debts.

Across from the mosque stands a new shopping centre. The mostly empty shops stand on land where the Imam used to grow rice. He cannot comprehend why so much of the food he once grew himself is now imported.

"I don't want to blame anyone for what has happened. It is not the fault of a single person. It is the work of many people. It is God's test for us all."

Officers call for Suharto to quit, page 6



Children in Manila toss sample ballot papers in the air after the close of voting yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: DOUGLAS CAMPOS

Philippines star poised for presidential role

Nick Cunningham-Bruce
in Manila

THE Philippines is preparing for a "Ronald Reagan era" as early results from elections yesterday pointed towards a handsome victory for the former matinee idol turned populist presidential candidate, Joseph Estrada.

Voting had barely finished before a widely smiling Mr Estrada was claiming "a victory for the masses for the first time", and talking about early steps he will take after assuming the presidency.

"This will be the last and greatest performance of my life," said Mr Estrada, whose mass appeal is founded on his tough-guy action film roles.

An informal exit poll by a Manila radio station showed him likely to take 38 per cent of the vote, to 18 per cent for the candidate of the outgoing administration, José de Venecia. The exit polls are too new and untried to be judged reliable, but partial results also showed Mr Estrada, aged 51, who had been the country's

vice-president, pulling easily clear of all 10 other would-be leaders.

Supporters assembling at his Manila mansion may wait until later today to crack open the giant bottle of champagne already bought to celebrate victory. But Ronaldo Zamora, a member of the inner circle and tipped for a key job under an Estrada presidency, said: "From the reports we are getting it will be a massive landslide."

Voters turned out in large numbers for what was one of the most peaceful elections of recent years. The death toll of 39 was relatively low by Philippine standards.

Election officials suspended the poll in some 20 towns of the troubled southern island of Mindanao, but voting elsewhere in the country was relatively orderly. "No guns like before, only hand phones and cameras," chuckled Candida, an official monitor at one polling station in the capital.

The prospect of an Estrada presidency was once widely treated as a poor joke. A college drop-out, the actor has been scorned by the Philip-



Joseph Estrada shows his inked thumb after voting

Clinton, holds his liquor better than Yeltsin and is less corrupt than [Indonesian President] Suharto," a university teacher, Randy David, remarked hopefully.

Mr Estrada plans to take a holiday to get over the rigours of the campaign. But on assuming office at the end of June, he says, he plans to move fast on easing poverty and crack down on government corruption.

He intends to keep for himself the interior portfolio, with its crime-busting responsibilities. "I will concentrate on the big fish," he warns. "Some of my friends may be the ones caught in these graft and corruption cases."

To ease the fears of business, which was mostly hostile to his candidacy, Mr Estrada emphasises his commitment to open market policies. But agrarian and land reform also come high on his agenda, in which he says his "first concern" will be to ease poverty. "I want to be remembered as the president who championed the cause of the poor," Mr Estrada says.

Albright braced for an attack from Israel

Martin Kettle in Washington

PRESIDENT Clinton struggled to keep his Middle East peace plans alive yesterday in the face of the latest Israeli rejection of his policy and against a right-wing campaign in the United States against American-backed settlement terms.

Before his departure for Europe today, Mr Clinton told his secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, to stay in Washington for talks with the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, who is due in the US for a five-day visit tomorrow.

An American invitation to the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to attend peace talks in Washington this week lapsed after Mr Netanyahu turned the idea down.

The White House had thought Mr Netanyahu would overcome his objections to US plans for an Israeli withdrawal from a further 13 per cent of the occupied West Bank and would come to the Washington talks. But Mr Netanyahu called the administration's bluff.

Instead, there is the prospect of the Israeli leader arriving in Washington to campaign against the administration. Mr Netanyahu's five-day stay consists of a series of meetings with Mr Clinton's domestic foes on Capitol Hill, several television appearances and a speech to a conference.

Mr Clinton's decision to press for a fresh Albright-Netanyahu meeting this week followed emergency White House talks yesterday attended by the national security adviser, Sandy Berger, and the US Middle East envoy, Dennis Ross.

The move is also aimed at keeping Mrs Albright — one of the most popular members of the administration with the American public — on the spot to counter Mr Netanyahu's expected propaganda offensive while Mr Clinton and his entourage are travelling in Europe.

Mr Clinton said that the objective of the new talks would be "to seek to overcome the remaining differences so that we can proceed immediately with accelerated, permanent status talks" under the 1993 Oslo accords, which sought to map out a Middle East settlement.

He said that Mrs Albright would report to him whether there was any basis for launching a peace conference in Washington involving Mr Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestinian Authority. May 22 and May 28 are two possible dates.

In a further sign of his hard-line intentions, Mr Netanyahu yesterday confirmed his chief foreign policy adviser, Zalman Shoval, as the new Israeli ambassador to Washington. In his earlier stint in the Washington job, Mr Shoval caused former President George Bush to protest personally to the Israeli government about his "outrageous behaviour" in criticising US policy.

Third youth dies in French gang feuds

Jon Henley in Paris

FRENCH parents and relatives yesterday joined police in calling for urgent government action to counter an unprecedented wave of youth violence, after a spate of armed killings that has left three teenagers dead and a dozen hospitalised in the past week.

"Something has to be done," said Patrice Téhoué, whose nephew Jean-Michel, aged 17, died on Saturday after being kicked and stabbed by a gang of 20 youths in the suburb of Aulnay-sous-Bois, north of Paris.

"From what his friends say, my nephew died because someone from this estate took a jacket from a boy from another block. His friends fled

and Jean-Michel was left on his own. They went for him like wild animals — it was a lynching. He didn't have a chance."

A police spokesman from the Seine-Saint-Denis force said the attack was one of the most savage he had seen. "They weren't carrying guns, which these days is unusual, but it made no difference," he said.

Gangs of teenagers have attacked not just each other but also public-sector workers, prompting strikes

"We're getting to the point where some of these estates are becoming unpolicable."

The killing came three days after the murder last Wednesday of Abdelraouf Hassouna, a teenager from the south-

eastern Paris suburb of Créteil who was hit in the back at point-blank range by two shots from a pump-action shotgun. Police, who have arrested two youths, aged 19, from a rival gang, say Abdelraouf was murdered "because he ventured on to a neighbouring estate to retrieve a stolen motorbike".

The same day, a boy, aged

17, identified only as Marc, died in a hail of gunshots in a wood north of the Mediterranean port city of Marseille. His two self-confessed killers, aged 16 and 17 and both armed, told police he had

teased one of them about a former girlfriend.

The latest incidents follow two other shotgun killings by teenagers in March and April. Gangs of teenagers wielding stones, baseball bats, pistols and firebombs have attacked not just each other but also public-sector workers, prompting strikes by bus drivers and refuse collectors

jobless figure is 12.5 per cent, youth unemployment in some depressed suburbs — where much violence is centred — exceeds 50 per cent.

Police are alarmed by the ease with which young people are obtaining firearms. A recent survey of 1,171 "sensitive" suburbs and estates showed the number of fatal shootings involving teenagers had doubled to 16 since 1993, while the number of injuries from pistols, rifles and shotguns had risen by 100 to 247.

"Weapons are clearly too easy to get hold of for many kids — from parents who are members of shooting clubs, for example," said Gilles Lafont, a Paris police inspector.

"If social problems are at the root of much of this, we're also asking the government to look again at gun laws."



Artist Pulpuru Davies carries his glass artwork near Warhuton, West Australia. It will be on display at the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur

Mud flies in Paraguay after country's 'cleanest' general election

Phil Gunson, Latin America Correspondent

PARAGUAY was plunged again into political uncertainty yesterday when Sunday's general election, initially praised by all sides as the cleanest in the country's history, collapsed into mutual recriminations during the count.

Despite exit polls that unanimously gave victory to Raúl Cubas of the ruling Colorado party (ANR), the opposition Democratic Alliance alleged a "monumental fraud". "We have established that 80 per cent of the returns sent to the electoral tribunal were incorrectly filled out," its presidential candidate, Domingo Laíno, said.

Declaring himself president-elect the opposition leader said the allegedly false returns formed "part of a huge trick" by the Colorado. The basis of his claim, accord-

ing to Ramón Pereira, director of the electoral register, lay not in the returns themselves but in faxes sent in to facilitate the tribunal's count.

Colorado supporters, chanting and sounding air horns, converged on party headquarters, where the vice-presidential candidate, Luis María Argana, declared the "Colorado storm" had "crushed the anti-Colorado, anti-patriotic and anti-Paraguay Alliance".

But the loudest cheers were for references by Mr Cubas to the party's original candidate, retired general Lino Oviedo, who was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for an alleged coup attempt two years ago.

"Oviedo loves the poor people and the peasants," one supporter, Carlos Oviedo (no relation), said.

Mr Cubas owes his candidacy to Gen Oviedo, who originally selected him as a vice-presidential running mate, and he has promised to find a

way of releasing the former army commander after taking office on August 15.

About 85 per cent of the 2 million registered voters turned out to elect a president, vice-president, members of parliament and provincial authorities. The voting was peaceful and local and international observers reported only minor irregularities.

It was nearly midnight when Dr Laíno's accusations of fraud produced a sudden change in the atmosphere, with the risk of clashes between rival party supporters.

"There could have been a tragedy on the streets last night," the veteran radio commentator, Humberto Ruhn, said. But most Alliance supporters ignored their leaders' call to take to the streets.

The electoral tribunal had originally promised almost complete results by yesterday, but put back its calendar by a day due to the problems with the early returns.

Officers echo student calls for Suharto to end his 32-year rule

Irwani Firdaus in Jakarta

PROMINENT critics of President Suharto of Indonesia accused him yesterday of corruption and abuse of power and echoed student demands for an end to his 32-year rule.

Campuses were largely quiet as the country celebrated a holiday, but protests were planned in Jakarta and Bandung today.

Amien Rais, the leader of Indonesia's second-largest Muslim organisation, declared support for the protests and told thousands of cheering supporters that Mr Suharto led "the most corrupt regime in the universe".

He said the students were voicing the frustration of Indonesia's middle-class and workers with the president's rule and an economic crisis that led to riots last week when fuel prices rose sharply. He urged the army, the bed-

rock of Mr Suharto's power base, to desert their leader.

Thousands of supporters of Mr Rais's moderate Muhammadiyah organisation, which boasts 25 million members, cheered his calls for the president to quit, and shouted: "People Power, People Power".

A group of retired generals and politicians urged the assembly that named Mr Suharto to a seventh five-year term in March to revoke the appointment. Gen Ali Sadikin told a press conference that the government had for too long used "state money for personal interests" and abused its power. — AP.

Suharto, 76, is taking part in a conference of developing countries in Egypt this week, confident that the country of 200 million people remains under control. Before leaving, he urged Indonesians to respect national stability and threatened to unleash the military if they did not.

Kosovo guerrillas ambush Serb convoy

KOSOVO Liberation Army gunmen ambushed a Serbian police convoy yesterday, only seven miles from the provincial capital Pristina. Residents along the main road west to Pec said the convoy came under heavy fire at about 7am local time as it climbed a wooded hill.

The police returned fire and the battle lasted about 10 minutes. Reporters saw a helicopter land in the grounds of Pristina hospital to deliver three wounded officers for emergency treatment.

The KLA has grown rapidly since a Serb onslaught in March on two villages in the Drenica region killed about 80 people. Its forces first attacked the Pristina-Pec road on Friday, about 30 miles from the capital. — Jonathan Saele, Pristina.

Bhutto arrest ordered

A PAKISTANI court issued no-bail warrants for the arrest of Benazir Bhutto on charges of illegally handing out jobs while in power, her party spokeswoman said. Ms Bhutto is accused of making illegal appointments to the state airline, Pakistan International Airlines, while she was prime minister, and of giving staff undeserved promotions and foreign assignments.

The warrants were issued by Justice Ghous Mohammad at an accountability court in Sindh, after Ms Bhutto failed to appear before him. The opposition leader is believed to be in London following a lecture tour of the United States and Canada. Dismissed twice as prime minister on charges of corruption and misuse, she has denied every allegation of corruption levelled at her by the government and media. — Reuters, Karachi.

Joint search for war dead

IRAN and Iraq launched their first joint operation to search for the remains of thousands of soldiers killed in their 1980-88 war, the Iranian news agency Irna said. Brigadier-General Mirfakhri Balazadeh, head of Iran's committee for the war's missing in action, said a 10-man Iranian team had entered Iraq to join a search of the former battle zones.

"The measure marks a turning point in the two countries' efforts to discover bodies of killed soldiers and those missing in action," he said. Gen Balazadeh said an Iraqi team would visit Iran for another round of joint searches, the result of months of negotiations. — Reuters, Tehran.

Briton on trial in Burma

THE TRIAL of a Briton branded a terrorist by the Burmese junta opened at a special court at Rangoon's Insein prison. It was the first trial open to reporters since the military seized power in 1988 and was attended by the British and Australian ambassadors.

James Mawdsley, aged 25, who holds British and Australian passports, was arrested on April 30 on charges of illegally entering Burma. He was allegedly distributing anti-government leaflets at a market in Moulmein, the capital of southern Mon state.

Last September, Mr Mawdsley chained himself to a school gate in Rangoon, spray-painted the Buddhist word for loving kindness on the wall, shouted anti-government slogans and distributed leaflets. He was arrested and deported to Thailand. If convicted, he faces up to five years in jail. — AP, Rangoon.

Japanese gang fight kills one

A FIGHT between biker gangs on Sunday in Kawasaki left a youth dead and shut down traffic on a busy city street for two hours. Seiji Magome, aged 17, died after he was beaten on the head with a bat and stabbed in the chest. The fight involved as many as 90 gang members.

Another 17-year-old was slashed in the ear. Press reports said the fight began when a gang from the neighboring city of Yokohama started taunting a Kawasaki biker gang. When the sides came to blows, the Yokohama group called in reinforcements, swelling its ranks to 60.

Four lanes of traffic on a main road were closed for two hours, the reports said. — AP, Tokyo.

Monk dies in poisoned well

POISONED water in a monastery well in north-east Romania claimed the life of a monk and put two priests in hospital. The accident took place on Sunday in the Hadambu monastery in Iasi county, a spokesman from the Orthodox Church in Bucharest said.

Nelu Lepcalnic, aged 20, was trying to repair the well when he fell into the water, fainted and floated motionless. Two priests dived in to save him and both fainted. Lepcalnic died in hospital. Doctors said carbon monoxide from the petrol that powers the well's pump had escaped into the water. — AP, Bucharest.

Geyser erupts in NZ garden

A GEYSER has erupted on a woman's front lawn in Rotorua, New Zealand, terrifying her and her neighbours. "I'm frightened. I don't know what is going to happen and so I am looking for somewhere else to live," Karen Herbert said.

The geyser flared to life on Friday, hurling boulders and steam into the air and leaving a steaming pool 8ft in diameter and 10ft deep. The quiet street, just three blocks from Rotorua's main business district and close to the geothermally-active Kuirihi Park, is now filled with sightseers.

Mrs Herbert, who rents the house, said she feared that a new geyser would erupt under her home. "The ground gave way when the man who mows the lawns was working recently. He fell into a muddy hole and now he won't come back." — Rotorua, AP.

India's nuclear test

Seed of hope lies in show of strength

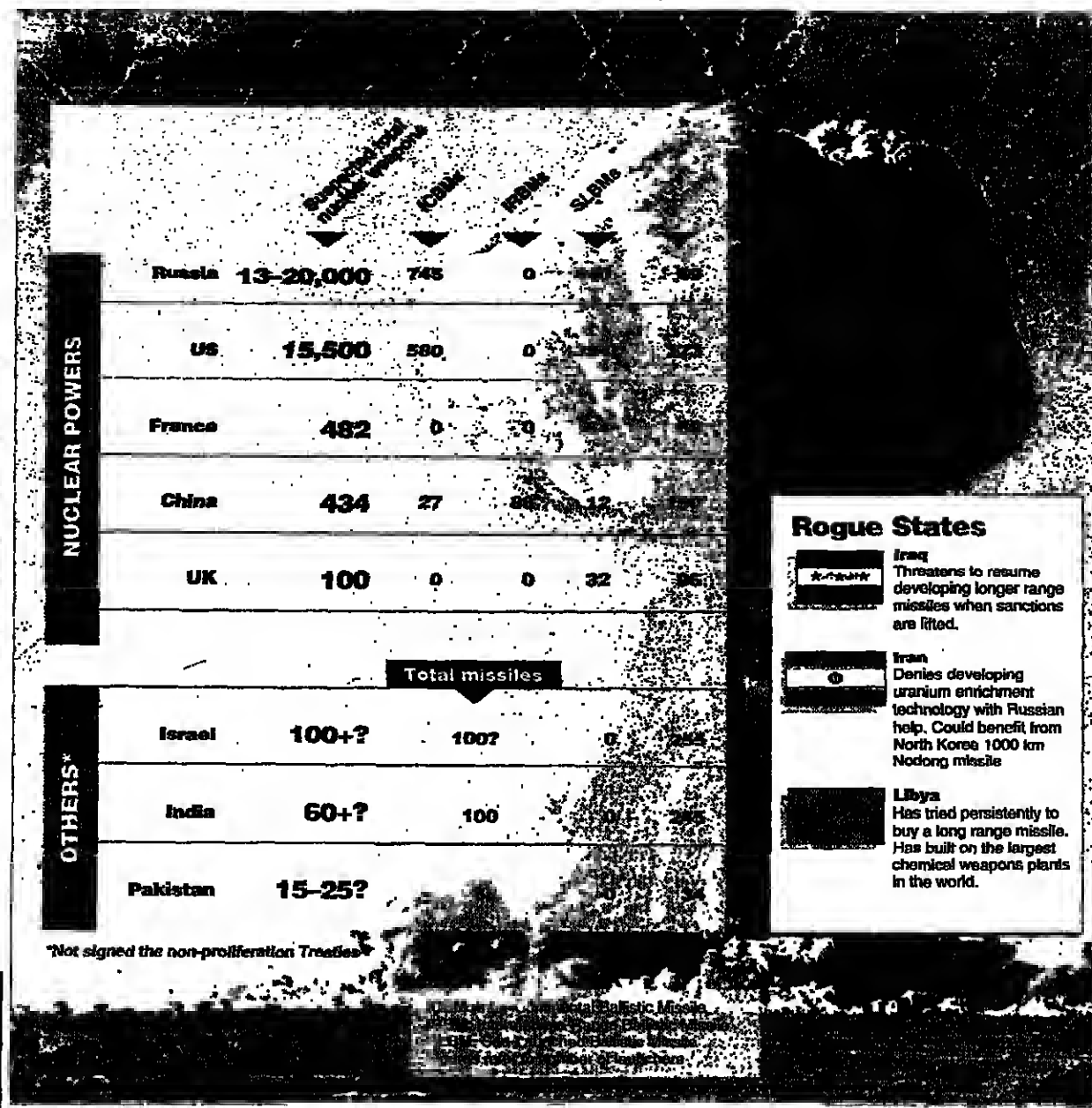


Scientists study the site of India's first and — until yesterday — only nuclear test, in 1974 in Pokhran. The country may now be prepared to sign an international test ban treaty

New Delhi has crossed the threshold from theory to practice to become an atomic power. Which way will it turn next, asks Diplomatic Editor **Ian Black**

INDIA'S surprise nuclear test, three underground blasts in quick succession under the baking plateau of the Rajasthan desert, is a double-edged coin of disaster and promise. It is bad news because one of the world's three "threshold" states has crossed the border from theory to practice in a frightening move that makes volatile South Asia more prone to the danger of nuclear warfare than anywhere on earth. And the fact that one of yesterday's devices was a thermonuclear means India now has the technical capacity, as one worried British expert said last night, "to put a sizeable crater in the centre of Lahore". Pakistan was quick to blame its neighbour. "The responsibility for dealing a death blow to global efforts at nuclear non-proliferation rests squarely with India," the foreign minister, Gohar

Ayub Khan, said in a statement to his country's senate. The potential good news lies in the long-signalled possibility that, having proved its awesome capability, India could now be prepared to sign up to a key international treaty designed to prevent others from following suit. This would be an important development for a country proud of its non-aligned past, and which has been the most difficult member of the awkward squad of nuclear threshold states since the darkest days of the cold war. In 1996, India refused to endorse the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. It has also stayed firmly out of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which legitimises nuclear bombs in the hands of the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China, while forcing others to renounce the option to build them. Israel, which has main-



Countdown to blasts that shook Asian neighbours

1974: India tests its first nuclear weapon
1979: Begins development of the Agni intermediate-range missile
1983: Test fires the Prithvi short-range missile
1989: Test fires the Agni
1994: Under US pressure, claims that the Agni is only a demonstration of the technology, rather than a fully-fledged weapon
1996: Defence ministry announces the demonstration is over and deployment could begin
1998: India tests three bombs described as "a fission device, a low-yield device, and a thermonuclear device"

or international financial institutions, it might also be offered sweeteners in the form of civilian nuclear co-operation or greater foreign investment, should it pledge to forgo future testing. As concern grows about more hair-trigger instability in an already tense region, the US and its fellow nuclear powers, including Britain, face a tough choice between the instinct to punish and the pressure to placate. India's statement yesterday that it wanted to achieve "a truly comprehensive international arrangement" banning testing and encouraging the "total and global elimination of nuclear weapons", must be

taken as an olive branch in the face of predictable but low-key expressions of regret and calls for restraint. If India did agree to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, it would be a Muslim conqueror. New Delhi saw that as a warning to Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government to resist going nuclear, and a rejoinder to India's deployment last year of its new Prithvi missile. Until yesterday there had been only hints that India would conduct another test after its first in 1974. Some analysts asked last night why Western intelligence agencies, especially the CIA, had given no advance warning of the event. Experts speculated that the three tests were conducted on one day to avoid pressure to desist. Pratul Bidwai, an independent weapons policy analyst who campaigned for India to abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons, said: "We have dropped the ambiguity completely. China and Pakistan will regard us as a fully fledged nuclear adversary and so we will have two nuclear arms races — a small

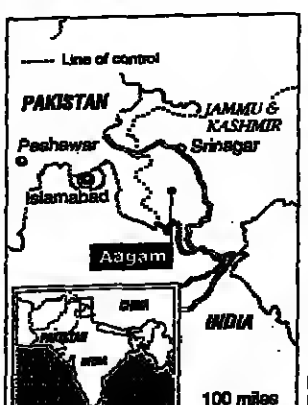
one with Pakistan and a big one with China." Western experts said the official nuclear weapons states must take their share of the blame. "This is a clear reason why we owe have to get on with treating nuclear disarmament as a top priority," said Dan Plesch of the British-American Security Information Council. The Blair government has replaced the CND line with a policy of the three wise monkeys who see nothing, say nothing and hear nothing. What's happened in India is the result.

Bulldozers that bring 'normalcy' to Kashmir

Suzanne Goldenberg in Aagam village sees the ugly traces of a battle between foreign militants and the Indian army

INDIAN soldiers used children to guide them into one of the fiercest battles in a nine-year-old rebellion against New Delhi's rule, a three-day confrontation that reduced almost an entire village to rubble. When last month's confrontation at Aagam was over, three soldiers and nine fighters were dead — according to the official version. Three militants had fled, and more than 60 houses were destroyed. The Indian army considers the operation a success. However, the battle underscores the tenuous nature of the "normalcy" New Delhi claims reigns in the Kashmir valley. "There was thunder and firing from every corner of the village," said Khurshid Alam, aged 14. "We were picked up and told to look inside for militants. I saw one fighter inside a house. He was lying down and one side of his face was covered with blood. He was almost dead. He told me: 'run away, and save your life'." The boy returned to tell the soldiers of the wounded fighter, and the troops moved in. But their opponent was not as close to death as Khurshid thought. In red letters, a plaque on the wall of the house where he saw the fighter reads: "Paratrooper Baldev Raj laid down his life fighting foreign militants." Now, Indian army engineers and combat troops swarm through the village, ostensibly to rebuild it but also to search for hidden weapons. It was, said Lieutenant Colonel Pradeep Katoch, who headed the operation, a much fiercer battle than he expected. "I never anticipated it would take so long," he said. "When I was leaving I told my man to keep the water hot for my bath." He said no locals were used in the battle. In its first act of atonement

Dr Farooq Abdullah has tried ineptly to steer between resentment against Indian troops and New Delhi's desire to maintain order. Many Kashmiris are disappointed at Dr Abdullah's failure to fulfil promises of greater autonomy and to punish human rights violations. They are also frustrated at the government's inability to create jobs or repair roads reduced to moonscapes by a decade of neglect. Despite a deficit last year of 14,000 million rupees (more than \$215 million), the government is under pressure to create jobs that has hired 7,000 more police and 10,000 bureaucrats. "We have jobs that one person should be doing being done by 10 people," said Umar Abdullah, Dr Abdullah's son, aged 26, and a first-time MP from Srinagar. However, locals say politicians are hoarding jobs for their relatives. And they despair at the antics of separatist politicians — who boycotted the elections — and who are also trading allegations of corruption. Some signs of ordinary life have returned to Srinagar. Beauty salons and video parlours have returned to the bustling markets and the first cinema is to reopen next month, local businessmen being unimpressed by the militants' ban on such activities as un-Islamic. Women have abandoned the veils they wore during the worst years of violence, couples stroll holding hands in the gardens that were once a no-go area and families go on picnics, once also declared un-Islamic. A Delhi businessman is planning to reopen Srinagar's most luxurious hotel this year. "This government measures normalcy and performance by counting the people on the road," snorted Mehbooba Mufti, who leads the Congress opposition in the state. "That doesn't mean the government is doing its job. They have not been able to fight politically, they are still dependent on the security forces."



Japan film puts Tojo on pedestal

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo

FIFTY YEARS after Japan's prime minister in the second world war, Hideki Tojo, was hanged as a war criminal, a controversial film is to be released here that honours him as an Asian hero unjustly treated by the victorious Allies. The movie, *The Fateful Moment*, has prompted fierce criticism from Japan's neighbours and added fuel to the domestic debate on the question of the country's responsibility for the war. General Tojo, who was found guilty of "negligence in preventing crimes against humanity" by the allied war crimes tribunal, is portrayed in the film as a man more stoned against than during. Skimming over his roles in expanding the war with China, promoting the tripartite pact with Germany and Italy, and ordering the



At an Allied tribunal, General Hideki Tojo (above) was sentenced to hang for his wartime leadership of Japan

attack on Pearl Harbour, the film focuses on the post-war trial in which manipulative Western prosecutors are shown as twisting the truth to trap a man of samurai integrity. "The truth was erased during the Allied occupation of Japan after its surrender in 1945," Yukio Iwanami, Tojo's granddaughter and the author of papers on which much of the film is based, told reporters. "My grandfather was not as bad as people say."

Her views reflect those of many Japanese who see their country's actions up until 1945 as an effort to rid Asia of Western imperialism, who and resent the fact that their wartime leader is demonised as much as Adolf Hitler or Benito Mussolini. "If this movie, which shows a unique Japanese spirit that disappeared at the end of the war, manages to restore the sense of pride in Japanese families and young people, then we shall have achieved something," the film's star, Masahiko Teraoka, told a press conference yesterday. China and North Korea have condemned Tokyo for allowing the film to be shown. Xinhua, China's official news agency, quoted a government source as saying: "We felt shocked and indignant over the fact that some people in Japan produced such a movie to whitewash aggression and sing the praises of Hideki Tojo." The North Korean Communist Party newspaper Rodong Sinmun called the movie "shameless" for seeking "to eradicate the guilty consciences of the past and implant pride of the past in the minds of the Japanese". In Japan, trade unionists at the film's makers have registered their unhappiness with its content. However, members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party approve of the movie. It is also certain to be endorsed by Professor Nobutaka Fujimura, whose claims that Japan was forced by the Allies to adopt a "masochistic" view of history, have wide support. The film goes on general release on May 23, the day on which Emperor Akihito leaves for his first official visit to Britain since succeeding his father Hirohito, whom Tojo exonerated of any blame for the war.

Milan court dresses to kill in Gucci trial

John Hooper in Milan

AROUND-NECKED white sweatshirt, deepened out from beneath Benedetto Ceraulo's beige gingham shirt. His can belt tumbled to within a shade of his chisel-tipped lace-ups. And together they offered a neatly informal counterpoint to his grey slacks and four-button blazer. Rarely can an alleged hitman have emerged from more than 15 months on remand as stylishly attired as the one accused of shooting Maurizio Gucci. A handsome man with thick black hair, flecked iron-grey in places, Mr Ceraulo watched the opening day of his trial from inside a steel cage built to one side of the courtroom. Five people, including Gucci's widow Patrizia, are accused of a role in the former fashion magnate's death. But Mr Ceraulo is the one alleged to have pulled the trigger, and this was the first time since his arrest that he had been seen by anyone but the police, his lawyers and jailers. Nor had anyone else heard him until the moment he was asked by the judge whether he objected to television coverage of the hearing. "I have nothing to hide," Mr Ceraulo declared. Maurizio Gucci, the last member of his family to head the firm that carries its name, was shot dead in March 1995. The killer followed him into the building where he had his office and murdered him on the stairs, while a getaway driver waited outside. An eyewitness remarked at the time that the murderer had been "elegantly dressed". But that scarcely narrows the field in design-conscious Milan: some of the lawyers and reporters packed into

Assize Court No 4 could have been mistaken in another city for fashion models on their way to a shoot. Ivano Savioni is the man accused of hiring Mr Ceraulo and his getaway driver, Orazio Cicola. Until his arrest, he was the night porter in a seedy one-star hotel, just favoured by private bankers. The only stumbling to be seen in court was on the chins of some of the cooler barristers. On the same bench as Mr Savioni sat the diminutive Giuseppina Aurilemma, a silk print scarf knotted at her neck, dressed in black trousers and a yellow sweater.

They claim was a fiendish plot to blackmail their client by threatening to turn her in to police for a murder she never committed. A significant obstacle was yesterday raised in their path when Mr Savioni's lawyer, Paolo Antimiani, said after the brief opening session that his client would testify he had met Mrs Gucci in person. Mrs Gucci was not in court yesterday. "She decided not to come both for reasons of health and for fear of publicity of the cameras and lights," said one of her lawyers, Giovanni Maria Dedola. In May 1992, Mrs Gucci underwent an operation for the removal of a tumour in the left frontal lobe, which doctors say may have impaired her judgment. "We are closely re-examining her state of health to make further representations to the court," said Mr Dedola. The case resumes on May 19.

Rarely can an alleged hitman have emerged from more than 15 months on remand as stylishly attired as this one

round the corner from the Piazza Loreto where the Milanese strung up Mussolini and his mistress after the war. One expected a shabby figure with two days' growth. But the man in handcuffs on a bench at the back of the court was also wearing a blazer and slacks, together with a French blue shirt of the sort

She is, in several respects, the key figure in this extraordinary affair. She is accused of contacting Mr Savioni — and, through him, the killers — on behalf of her best friend, Patrizia Gucci. The key issue at the trial will be whether she did so at her friend's behest or as part of what Mrs Gucci's law-

Comment

Diary

Matthew Norman

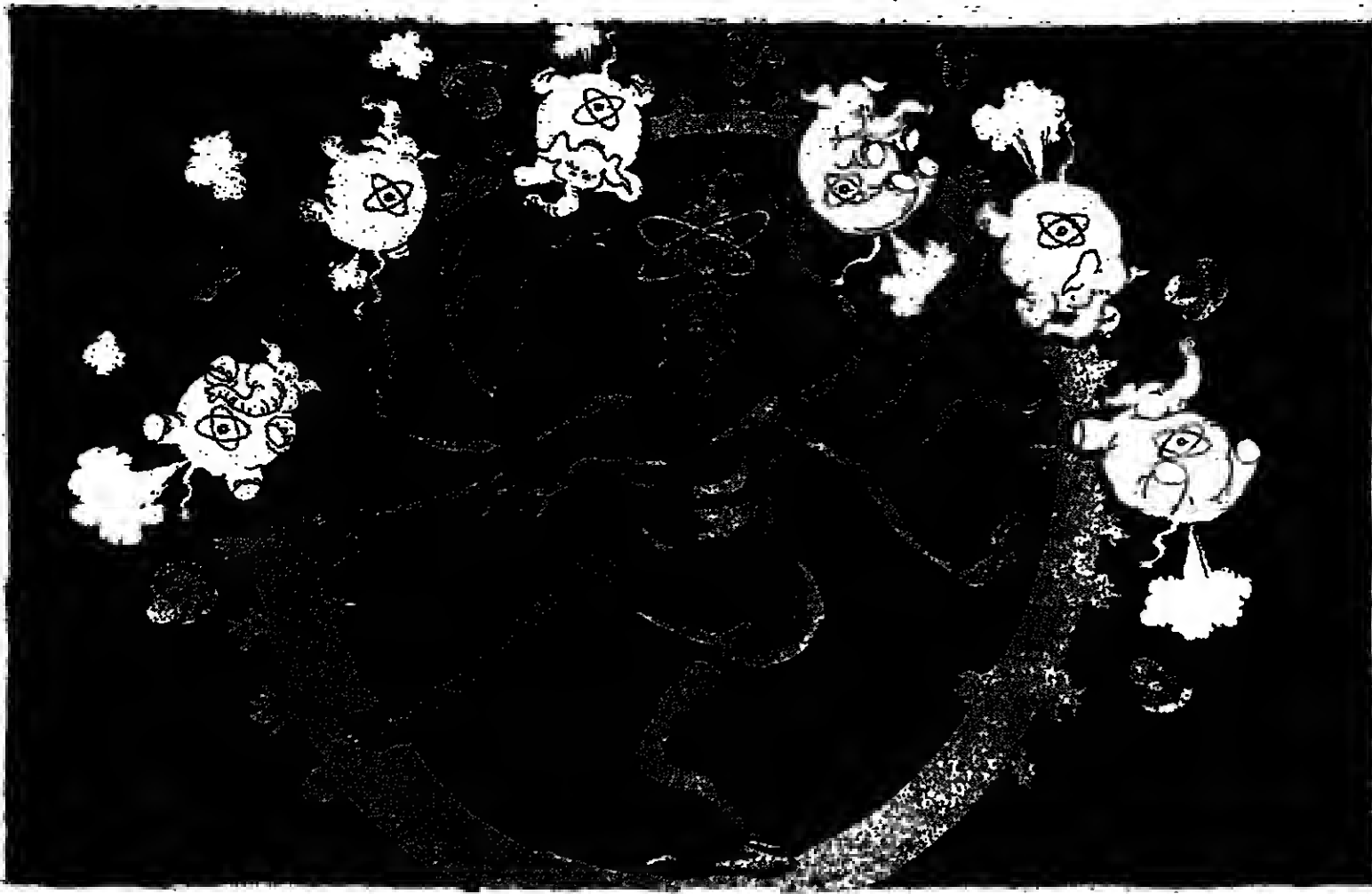
FOLLOWING the case of Paul Rundle and the vanishing job offer, the Diary is forced to undergo a radical rethink. Paul, unloved of Mr Blair since that Gordon Brown biography, last week accepted Rita Rose Boycott's invitation to become political editor of the Express. However, when Number Ten got to hear of this — enchantingly, Philip Gould now sits in on editorial conferences, while Clive Hollick runs the title — the offer was withdrawn. In view of this, I have decided to fall into line... and to this end, we rang the Downing Street press office yesterday. Once the Rundle veto was confirmed — "it sounds like bollocks to me", said a press officer, using the official New Labour code words for "Yes, that's absolutely true" — we asked permission to appoint Bernard Ingham as Diary Astrologer. "I think you might as well try elsewhere for that," in other words, Bernard is unacceptable and we must look for another stargazer. Fair enough. In future, mean while, the entire column will be fixed to Alastair Campbell each day at 5.15 pm. Unless, of course, Al would prefer to write it himself.

IN Chippenham, the Crown Prosecution Service is appealing against sentence after Rodney Ellis was caught driving while almost twice over the limit. Mr Ellis's solicitor told the Kennel bench that his client, joint Master of the Tadworth Hunt, only drove home from a hunt dinner because his wife was in pain after suffering an injury earlier that day. Well, if you please, to presiding beak Lady Johnston, wife of Wilshire's Lord Lieutenant Lt Gen Sir Maurice Johnston. The good Lady declared that Mr Ellis had "just cause" for driving because it was a "genuine emergency" (indeed so how noble of the Master not to call an ambulance, and let him off without a ban).

THE campaign against that sexist "Media Babes" drill continues. Mary Ann Steel of the Times was our first Media Matron, and for our second we look to the Independent on Sunday. "Do you want us to stop wearing short skirts, or what?" asks Anne McElroy, director of my friend Wendy Manderson. As it happens, yes. Would you be prepared to pose for us in something sensible... a long tweed skirt, perhaps? "I can't tell if you are serious," says Anne, woundingly. "At the end, all women are for executives to take them seriously." But surely that's the raison d'être of Media Matrons? "It's an absurd name. I'm not a matron. It reminds me of the mother-in-law in the Melkado." False modesty. Anne McElroy becomes our second Media Matron. Libby Furves may be next.

BY way of an audacious rhetorical flourish, my old friend Helen Brinton discourses on railway crime. Interviewed in Capital Transport Bulletin, the android MP for Peterborough calls for tighter security at stations. "An example of inadequate staffing was when I was marooned in a small station in Kent late at night," she insists. "Everything had been locked up and I found myself trapped. Eventually I had to climb out of the station." Thankfully, Helen — the Mark IV model — is now fitted with a turbo-charged spring which allows her to vault great heights, in the style of the Magic Roundabout's Zeebees. Even so, is there no end to the indignities this blameless cyborg must suffer at the hands of Britain's railways?

YET more legal action menaces the American President. Sheikh Razi Rashid al-Yahya Bani Sakir, memorably named mayor of the Jordanian village of Basilia, is suing Bill Clinton... not for once, for sexual harassment, but for naming his dog Buddy. The Sheikh, the first of whose many names, is pronounced "Buddy", cannot cope with villagers addressing him as "Clinton's dog", he says, and is scared to leave his home, and seeks \$3 million damages, for psychological stress and loss of earnings.



An ethical foreign policy is fine, but not when you're in a hole in the corner

Hugo Young



THE ABSURD crisis over Sierra Leone gets its sting from the Scott Inquiry into arms for Iraq. Should a diamond mine be at the disposal of a brutal dictatorship, or of a regime that might plausibly be called democratic? The core question, which British business has a sizeable interest in answering, is not important. But memories of Scott have been decisive in the inept handling of it by both ministers and officials. That famous challenge to the ethics of the previous government has an after-life which erodes the ethical foreign policy proclaimed a year ago by the new one.

The first casualty of Scott is the man who made it the greatest triumph of his career. Robin Cook lived off the indictments Scott placed in his hands against the Tories. There is no serious equivalence between arms to Sierra Leone and arms to Iraq. But there are arms. And there have been some ill-judged ministerial statements to Parliament. Mr Cook is as neurologically sensitive to seeming guilty of Scottish offences as the Tories are vengefully eager to nail him with the charge. This has not led the Foreign Secretary to take the most measured attitude to his situation.

But his officials, equally, were determined not to have another Scott. When information about arms-assistance for the overthrown democrat, President Kabbah, first looked like going public, their reaction was to call in the police. That what a Customs and Excise investigation means. The officials were guarding their back against any repetition of the Scott findings that they were complicit in breaches of the law. Yet by mobilising a Customs investigation, they were putting their minister in

hauk. Any inquiry he wanted to make, when he found out what had been going on, would get smashed with the criminal investigation, putting his officials at risk of double jeopardy, and exposing himself as a compellable witness. The legal advice, once the law was in motion, strictly limited how he could respond as a politician.

One result of this has been to give Sandline International, the private security firm that handled the overthrow of Sierra Leone's military junta, the chance to appear as injured innocents, doing British national business under cover of the Government's deniable approval. It is unlikely that things were as simple as that. Sandline and its associate businesses have a big interest both in diamonds and in the millions they are owed by the now-restored president. The restoration of democracy, in their scheme of things, was an instrumental accident in the larger cause. Nevertheless, closer to home than this murky world, three culpable errors are emerging.

First, it is obvious that nobody at the Foreign Office, whether official or minister, spotted the danger fast enough. It's all very well for the Prime Minister to toss aside the crisis on the grounds that the democrats were restored to power. But this broke a British-drafted UN resolution, reinforced by an order-in-council that is now part of British law. If the Customs inquiry finds that Sandline broke the law, and our Minister in Freetown was an accessory, what price Mr Blair's exoneration yesterday — and what credit to FCO officials who, even if they technically kept ministers informed about events, failed to insist on their urgent priority?

Second, the ministers themselves, especially Tony Lloyd, the minister of state, and Baroness Symons, the parliamentary under-secretary, do seem to have been doing the job. Both allowed themselves to give misleading answers to Parliament about the state of knowledge of the Government as a whole, thus revealing, as clearly as anything, the pitiful indifference to African affairs that is to be found in the party of New Labour. For modern Labour politicians, who doubtless regard such old Commonwealth experts as Tony Greenwood and Arthur Bottomley as names out of the taxonomy of the ark, South Africa was the only place that mattered, and once Mandela entered his inheritance they were absorbed from taking any further interest south of the Costa del Sol.

NETHER Lloyd nor Symons, plainly, gave Sierra Leone the priority it turned out to deserve. While officials half-informed them of what the machinery of covert action was grinding out, it would seem they were paying only half-attention. But then so did their boss. And he is the more culpable: not for any sinister contrivance of amnesia, nor even, I think, for suggesting that this was an almighty cock-up not directly involving himself. The real case against him is that he has allowed the Freetown episode to blow a large hole in a foreign policy objective which is thoroughly desirable.

This is the third and largest blunder. Ever since Mr Cook stated his aspiration that Britain should try and take an "ethical" approach to international questions, he has been mercilessly ridiculed. It is not always plain whether his critics would prefer Britain to adopt the openly unethical pursuit of national interest adopted by, say, France: ex-

porting chemical weapons, planting bombs in allied countries such as New Zealand, assassinating foreign nationals. Or whether they are scornful merely of the compromises that Britain, having stated her policy, is sometimes forced to make. Whatever the case, it has been presented with a ferocity that seems to imply we would be better off with a Foreign Secretary who refrained from any mention of ethics.

To anyone who, on the contrary, applauds Mr Cook's ambition, the Sierra Leone imbroglio is a disappointment not so much because the arms were exported to aid the private army as because this happened without discussion. If an ethical foreign policy is to be developed, it has to be tested in every hard case. Choosing between the defence of a UN resolution and the restoration of democracy is precisely the kind of delicate decision in which the ethical element merits careful debate. This would doubtless be anguished and imperfect. But the trouble is, it never took place. There was no meeting. The furtiveness of the officials, and the negligence of the ministers, mean that a relevant case-study is missing from the canon of what, if it pretends to be serious, would be a ground-breaking approach to foreign policy.

Ethics have more to say than ordaining restraint in the sale of arms to Indonesia. If they're merely prohibitive, they won't engage with much reality. Labour foreign policy seems to favour a broader activism than the Tories showed: the deployments of the SAS in Bosnia. But on what principles? Ethics imply a re-definition of national interest to encompass them in the diplomatic arena. This will never be successfully achieved in a hole in the corner.

longer justifiable by any threat. We need verified destruction to prevent them being stolen. The Start talks have stopped. The Americans are waiting for the Duma to agree Start II before beginning Start III. Now that

A strategy of reducing the risks to Britain should build upon the Tories' unilateral nuclear disarmament steps. John Major abandoned nuclear artillery and battlefield rockets, the Tactical Air to Surface Missile, the nuclear role of RAF Tornados, the navy's nuclear depth charges and even limited the warheads on Trident.

We need to get Russian nuclear weapons off hair trigger alert, but this means being prepared to act ourselves. Even when off alert, nuclear weapons present a grave risk no

many cold warriors see the need for rapid action to reduce the nuclear risk, most of the technical work has been done by the hofins. But the Clinton administration is hamstrung by fundamentalists in the Senate who hate international

agreements of all kinds especially those on defence, and also by the results of his own sleazy behaviour. Paralysis in Washington is matched by catatonia in Moscow. Yeltsin presides over a decaying Russian nuclear infrastructure that becomes ever more deadly as it decays. Tony Blair sees the relationship with the US, and Clinton in particular, as central to his foreign policy. But Washington is made up of competing interests. Throughout the Cold War, Europeans acted as a counterweight to the worst bomb-happy Americans. Tony Blair should now rally the Europeans to assist those sections of the US government trying to reduce the nuclear threat.

Come clean, cuddly Ken

Ros Coward



SO LONDON is to have a mayor and Red Ken's return is widely hoped for by those on the left with a vague nostalgia for the days of the GLC. Blair's machine has gone into overdrive to prevent this happening because New Labour was defined as much against Livingstone's GLC as it was against TUC-dominated old Labour. But while we know where the party stands, what do we know of Livingstone himself? Did he learn anything from the GLC experience or is he dreaming of recreating it?

Remarkably, Livingstone's political reputation seems only to grow with the years. He kept quiet during the Major era but the combination of an avuncular face and having been in the right place at the right time was enough to give him mythological status. He came to be associated with more optimistic times before radical politics were sidelined as "loony leftism", remembered as the only person who ever orchestrated any popular opposition to Thatcher. But for those of us who remember the GLC first hand, this uncritical nostalgia seems very peculiar.

Professor Stuart Hall's essay on the GLC (in Sarah Dunant's book *The War Of The Worlds*) should be compulsory reading at the moment. He defines Livingstone's GLC as an important political moment "because of the new form of politics and political alliances through which it was constituted". These were social movements like feminism, gay politics and anti-racism which, having emerged in the Seventies, came into often difficult alliance with each other and with the old forces of London Labour in the GLC. Occasionally these alliances had extraordinary imaginative and popular results. Hall praises the Fare's Fair campaign, which merged concerns about equality (everyone should have equal access to basic services), environment (prioritising public transport over cars) and women's issues (safety ensured by more guards and more people on the streets).

EVERYONE remembers this campaign. London's transport and environment have got measurably worse since, so the rest of the GLC enterprise basks in the reflected glory of its far-sightedness. But this was Livingstone's one moment of true glory. He also presided over a time of excesses, left-wing cronyism and vanguardism. The emphasis was often on what was correct rather than what was democratic, possible or likely to gain popular support. In practice the inclusion

of new political forces also meant bear-pits in which any organisation capable of shouting had an absolute right to attend. I was drawn into the dreaded Women's Committee presided over by Val Wise, a woman of staggering political naivete. Meetings regularly degenerated into rancorous conflict and chaos. There were many imaginative ideas but they were invariably drowned out by infighting about which groups were included or excluded. These left Val Wise completely at sea. Wandering through the empty panelled passageways of County Hall, with no sign of ordinary bureaucratic work in progress but with sounds of furious political exchanges emerging from behind closed doors, I remember thinking this must be what the early days of the Russian revolution were like.

By-passing normal processes of democracy and accountability was more than just unfortunate. A lot of money was spent. Most went up in fireworks and "festivals". Grants were handed out to promote publications like *Jenny Lives With Eric And Martin*. Groups were funded simply because they fitted the profile of "the oppressed" and shouted loudly. When the backlash came, it came with a vengeance. And quite right too. This was the pursuit of ideological correctness with a damning disregard for democracy. Hall concludes that whatever its local successes, such a strategy was bound to fail in the long run because it failed to address "the real fears, confusions, the anxieties as well as the pleasures of ordinary people".

Blair deserves credit for recognising the absolute need for popular consent, but over-reactions can also be problematic. New Labour believes every policy should command such a wide degree of consensus — the nature of which is

It was as if the Russian revolution was being replayed in County Hall

derived from private focus group research — that no public debate about different policy options takes place at all. In the short run this guarantees popular support. In the longer run it could become a repressive populism atrophy, ing the whole tradition of public debate to an even greater degree than in the late Eighties.

So, while I might still have nightmares about the GLC, I would not want Livingstone excluded from the process of finding London's new mayor. Curiously, New Labour may be drifting towards another form of disregard for democracy every bit as corrosive. But I want to know where Livingstone stands on the GLC experiment. Would he repeat the same mistakes? He is obviously a person of integrity, wants a better environment for London and likes news. But this does not automatically make him "Cuddly Ken". It's time for him to come clean.

With such terrible instruments of mass destruction, can we imagine humanity surviving the next millennium?

Dicing with death

Dan Plesch

THE FATEFUL decision announced yesterday by the new Indian government to test nuclear weapons requires immediate British action. Nuclear proliferation is not a spectator sport. Britain must now decide to enter formal negotiations in the UN for the elimination of nuclear arms. The Government should also initiate a technical study of how this can be achieved as part of a strategy of reducing the risks to Britain. The Cabinet should task the Foreign and Defence Secretaries to support those sections of the Clinton administration seeking to move the disarmament agenda forward. The urgency comes both from India's tests and also from an objective assessment that the risk of accidental nuclear war with Russia

remains far too high for comfort.

Last week attempts to get nuclear disarmament moving as part of the Non-Proliferation talks in Geneva were still being stonewalled. Appeals for action from states as diverse as South Africa and Switzerland fell on deaf ears at the US State Department. In Foggy Bottom, and in the Kremlin, Whitehall and the Elysee.

When Sheriff Clinton set off for the Gulf to tackle Saddam Hussein, Britain was happy to be his Deputy. Problem was there weren't no posse. One reason the posse stayed home was that they saw Britain and the US as hypocritical. We have a legal commitment under the NPT to negotiate away our nuclear weapons. If we want our bomb for ever why should not others?

The Pope has emphasised the grave danger if leaders

of governments do not have the wisdom of the will to put brakes on the production of such terrible instruments of death. Can we imagine humanity surviving the next millennium with nuclear weapons?

Peregrine Worsthorne

If Britain and the US want to keep their bombs, why should not others?

recently wrote a call to Ban the Bomb, saying that nuclear deterrence theories should be brushed aside as no more worth preserving than dirty old cowwebs. General George Lee Butler was, until 1994, the US Commander in Chief of Strategic Command. He was

the man who in the nuclear war movie sits in a big chair with lots of phones from which he can talk to the President and launch the big birds. General Butler now fervently rejects nuclear deterrence as an irrational and inappropriate policy.

A strategy of reducing the risks to Britain should build upon the Tories' unilateral nuclear disarmament steps. John Major abandoned nuclear artillery and battlefield rockets, the Tactical Air to Surface Missile, the nuclear role of RAF Tornados, the navy's nuclear depth charges and even limited the warheads on Trident.

We need to get Russian nuclear weapons off hair trigger alert, but this means being prepared to act ourselves. Even when off alert, nuclear weapons present a grave risk no

many cold warriors see the need for rapid action to reduce the nuclear risk, most of the technical work has been done by the hofins. But the Clinton administration is hamstrung by fundamentalists in the Senate who hate international

agreements of all kinds especially those on defence, and also by the results of his own sleazy behaviour. Paralysis in Washington is matched by catatonia in Moscow. Yeltsin presides over a decaying Russian nuclear infrastructure that becomes ever more deadly as it decays. Tony Blair sees the relationship with the US, and Clinton in particular, as central to his foreign policy. But Washington is made up of competing interests. Throughout the Cold War, Europeans acted as a counterweight to the worst bomb-happy Americans. Tony Blair should now rally the Europeans to assist those sections of the US government trying to reduce the nuclear threat.

Dan Plesch heads BASIC, the London- and Washington-based arms control organisation.

The Guardian

Tuesday May 12 1998
Edition Number 47172
119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER
Tel No: 0171-278 2332
Fax No: 0171-837 4530
E-mail: letters@guardian.co.uk
Website: http://www.guardian.co.uk

clean,
Ken

Peace by piece

Ulster can be reconciled

MAKING war is hard and painful, but making peace is not much easier. That much has been clear in Northern Ireland these last few days. The people are heading towards a vote for peace on May 22, and yet the emotions of war linger on: the hurt, the anger even the bravery have not gone away.

In the most literal sense the war is being kept alive by the armed rejectionists of both sides, the hardline republicans and loyalists who refuse to countenance any compromise, least of all the agreement sealed on Good Friday. One half of this macabre alliance is the Loyalist Volunteer Force; the other is the Continuity IRA, which appears either to have renamed itself or spawned a breakaway called, "the Real IRA." On Saturday night this faction said it was behind an attempted mortar bomb attack on an RUC station in Belleek in County Fermanagh — and warned that its ultimate target remained the British Cabinet. Such talk chills the heart of anyone who hoped the Good Friday deal might rid Northern Ireland of violence once and for all.

But even the peacemakers have not quite ceased all hostilities. Much of the bitterness endures. Unionists, for example, could not suppress their revulsion at seeing men they regard as cold-eyed killers feted as heroes at the Sinn Féin *ardfheis* at the weekend. For them, the sight of the IRA Balcombe Street gang receiving a 10-minute standing ovation from Sinn Féin delegates at their

Dublin conference was too much to take. They rounded on Mo Mowlam for granting terrorists a 36-hour release in order to attend the gathering — accusing her of "insensitivity" to their pain.

And yet these complaints, like the rejectionist antics of the hardliners, are hardly grounds for despair. On the contrary, they are the inevitable, if unhappy by-products of a successful peace process. If there was no genuine prospect of compromise, the fundamentalists would feel no need to scare voters with violence and mayhem. Similarly, although the elevation of convicted killers into political leaders is hard to stomach — as the Unionists can testify — it is an unavoidable feature of any sincere attempt to end an armed conflict. Ask the people of South Africa, Israel or Palestine. The fact that the Northern Ireland peace process has already reached the stage where former men of violence are demanding a seat at the democratic table should be seized on by Unionists — as a sign of hope.

The remarkable scenes in Dublin over the weekend make such optimism wholly justified. Sinn Féin not only backed the Good Friday agreement, thereby tacitly accepting the partition of Ireland, it also agreed to participate in a new elected assembly for the province. Gerry Adams described it as historic, and even the Ulster Unionists' Ken Maginnis admitted it was a "gigantic step." Some observers have been sceptical, imagining that republicans see this move as just a ruse, remaining poised to return to violence in an instant. But one should look closely at the words of the veteran "hardmen" themselves. Joe Cahill said that, after more than 50 years of struggle, the Good Friday agreement was republicanism's best opportunity yet. Pádraig Wilson, the commander of the IRA in the Maze, told the party the struggle was

not over yet, but that a Yes vote was the next step forward. The republican movement is making a genuine shift here, and we welcome it. The rejectionists will continue to make their bombs, but as politics replaces violence they will find no community to sustain them. Today's announcement of economic investment in the country will also help, by showing the benefits of a settlement. It is not easy, but the ways of war are slowly being replaced.

Testing times

India's explosive actions

INDIA has exploded three nuclear devices for muddled reasons to do with nationalism, the exigencies of internal politics, and international prestige. The most benign explanation is that New Delhi is signalling that it can from now on maintain an advanced nuclear capability by means other than testing, and that it will soon sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. India may plan to follow the test-and-sign strategy of both China and France, with the difference that India is not a declared nuclear power. In dealing with New Delhi, one problem will be that the United States is committed to sanctions against states which test, a course which might be counter-productive in the Indian case. If, for whatever reason, testing were to continue or be followed by actual deployment, Pakistan might decide to test. China, which has signed the CTBT, would probably stick to the treaty but would take other, serious, military measures. The shaky structure which until now has kept nuclear weapons under some control around the world would be endangered.

Why has the new Indian government, led

by the Bharatiya Janata Party, taken this step? The answer has little to do with genuine security considerations. Internally, the nuclear policy of the BJP is popular among an electorate which sees it only as a matter of national assertion. It is an issue on which the coalition the BJP heads can agree more easily than others. Internationally, the Indian decision to test may have been triggered by the knowledge that President Clinton, during his trip to Beijing next month, expects to secure Chinese support for the Missile Technology Control Regime, which would end Chinese missile help for Pakistan. Clinton might well then turn to India, as he prepares to visit New Delhi in the autumn, for some balancing act on proliferation. It looks as if New Delhi saw a window for testing and took it. The result is this dangerous precedent, to which the only real answer is genuine disarmament negotiations by the established nuclear powers. There are no doubt various lesser ways of placating or persuading India. But only obviously progressing nuclear disarmament will remove the justification for decisions like those which India has taken, and which many other countries might be tempted to take in the future.

Excluding hope

Help truants help themselves

AT first sight the conflicting rights look unresolvable: the unacceptable rise in the number of permanently excluded disruptive children from school against the rights of other children and their teachers to undisturbed lessons. Yet many schools are achieving progress without recourse to expulsions. Too many schools are excluding

too many children too quickly. If the schools with the worst record cut their exclusion rate to the average, exclusions would be halved. A similar story occurs with truancy: wide variations between schools with similar intakes. Manchester, for example, suffers four and a half times as much truancy as South Tyneside. The Social Exclusion Unit was right to select truancy and school exclusions as their first project. This is where the exclusion challenge begins: a crisis, to use their word, in which in each year a million children play truant, over 100,000 are excluded temporarily, and some 13,000 excluded permanently. These are the next generation of excluded adults. Meanwhile, both they and their communities suffer, as they turn to crime.

Sensibly, as the Education Secretary sets out on page 2 of *Guardian Education* today, ministers are concentrating on prevention. Special programmes for vulnerable children have the greatest potential: mentors for Afro-Caribbean children and achievement targets for children in care. Both groups suffer exceptionally high exclusion rates. A more relevant vocational curriculum at 14 would work wonders. Joint education/police patrols in Stoke-on-Trent's shopping malls have not just slashed truancy rates but cut juvenile crime by a third too. Electronic registration in Bolton increased attendance by a quarter. There were other pluses yesterday. The Prime Minister's visit to a FE college which accepts excluded children will have sent Whitehall an important message: the Government wants change. New targets — cutting both truancy and exclusions by one third by 2002 — was bold and brave. Slowly, we're edging back to a position most continental schools have continued to follow: an obligation on schools to absorb their own trouble and not off-load it.

Letters to the Editor

Religiously protesting

YOU report (Mormons fight the good fight, May 9) that in Utah "most babies are Mormon". But how can a baby possibly decide whether it is a Mormon or not? When they're old enough they might well decide that they don't want to be Mormon, having taken into account that Mormonism was invented less than 200 years ago by a confidence trickster named Joseph Smith. Terry Sanderson, London.

YOUR report that the Papal Guards had not fought a battle for 471 years (Murder in the Vatican, CA, May 9) is not correct. The last battle was on September 20, 1870, when the Italians finally attacked Rome and drove the Pope out. Nineteen members of the Papal Guard were killed. Philip Ross, Great Ayton, N Yorks.

IF THE vested interests who signed their letter (May 11) wish us to be reassured that genetically modified food is safe, would they please tell us how many people were in the control group, where it took place and for how long? Then maybe I will believe that I am not part of an ongoing experiment. David Buckingham, Exeter.

WHILST David Edgar is correct to state (Letters, May 7) that the RSC has performed numerous works by Howard Barker in the past, it is pertinent to observe that the last of these was in 1988. The Royal National Theatre has not yet produced one. Judy Daniels, (Howard Barker's agent), London.

WHILE it is easy to believe that the Indonesian people resent the predatory Suharto family (Letters, May 11), I find it difficult to imagine them being masochistic enough to brandish banners reading "Implement the IMF Agreement Now!" and "Down with Suharto's domestic fuel!" Pull the other one! Mike Hall, Brighton, East Sussex.

RECENTLY I had to have my sewer pressure washed. A vehicle like a small fire engine arrived with the registration A1 BGG. John Hudson, Filey, N Yorks.

Arms and the mandate

THE crisis over the export of arms to restore a democratically elected government in Sierra Leone has perhaps been unnecessarily blown up (Cook on defensive, May 11). We might debate the ethics of profiting from any conflict; Sandline was probably not involved out of a concern for human rights. Arms exports are undoubtedly deplorable, particularly where repressive regimes such as Indonesia's are concerned.

However, in this case, it was not such a government that was being supplied. It was precisely the opposite: an attempt to restore democracy. It would be wrong to condemn the Foreign Office for their involvement in this. We might even argue that the UN should have been supporting the pro-democracy forces themselves; it is unfortunate that the job of training these people should have gone to those motivated primarily by profit.

In spite of this, it is unfair to say that the FO was acting unethically by consenting to the arming of the freedom fighters; on the contrary, the official concern clearly used discretion to allow the export. This may be wrong according to the letter of the embargo; its spirit, on the other hand, would allow it. Richard Westerman, Christ's College, Cambridge.

MUCH of the media furore over Sierra Leone misses the point. The British Government has been consistent with Robert Cook's new ethical foreign policy by according formal recognition to the democratically elected government of President Kabbah at the Edinburgh Commonwealth meeting last October. It also gave important logistical help to the exiled government in formulating its post-restoration recovery programme.

What matters now is how to rebuild the war-torn country. When I visited Freetown before the coup, building up grassroots democracy and consolidating local government structures in co-operation with local chiefs was deemed a priority. This is all the more important now if the country is to return to stability and begin the painful path to economic reconstruction. Carl Wright, Director, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, London.

AS WITH Matrix Churchill, the curious proposition has been put forward that the law may be broken provided a government department has given its approval. Is it not time that this belief was tested in the courts? D J Richards, Evesham, Worcestershire.

IT IS claimed that, in this instance, the separation of means and ends is ethically dubious whilst, in the case of Iraq, economic sanctions which have caused untold suffering to ordinary people are justified as merely a means to an end, ie the establishment of a democratic government. One senses an hypocrisy which cannot be mitigated by tracking errant paperwork. Anushman Mondal, London.

RECENTLY took with me to Baghdad a year's supply of chemotherapy for an eminent surgeon, suffering from cancer. He had worked for years at the Hammersmith hospital — his speciality is correcting bone deformities in children. The DIT have said they will consider prosecution.

It is hard not to be confused when facing prosecution for attempting to deliver medicines which we are told are exempt from sanctions, when little mention has been made of this in relation to arms to Sierra Leone, which clearly were not. Felicity Arbuthnot, London.

WE may not be able to get rid of the dogs of war but should they be allowed to have their kennels in a civilised country? Alan Bartley, Thorralby, N Yorks.



Universities' corporate raiders

DONALD MacLeod's article (Take the money, but check the source, May 6) addresses some of the implications of corporate funding of higher education institutions, but falls short of addressing the long-term issues which surround the actual shift of funds.

At Imperial College, students have highlighted the role of the rector, Sir Ronald Osburn, in keeping a foot in the door for industry in his time. Not surprisingly, Imperial College serves as the oil industry's largest graduate recruitment ground and site for extraction-related research in England. In the short term, labelling privately funded projects as

"collaborations" and "mutually beneficial partnerships" appears reasonable, but due to the fact that research grants from the private sector periodically need renewing, researchers are cornered into complying with private interests and have little free choice in the direction of their work (consequently, the control over research is slipping further from the public's grasp). More worryingly, public funds granted by research councils are increasingly awarded only in conjunction with industrial sponsorship. In this context it may not be surprising that none of the environmental and climate change scientists we have asked to chair a debate between Shell representatives and the industry's critics on the ethical implications of oil funding in universities, felt able to accept the invitation. Neither could Sir Ronald commit himself to participate in the debate. Jan Rietema, Tom Smith, Environmental Society, Imperial College Union, London.

Second opinion

ON the front page (May 8), Hillary Clinton's support for a Palestinian state "poured oil" on US-Israeli relations — the opposite of your page 21 report, where she "poured petrol" on them. Fred Brooks, Redgrave, Suffolk.

RE "White clubs fear ethnic racketeers" (May 8). "Ethnic" is not synonymous with non-white. We are all ethnic. Martin Smith, Oxford.

Empty promise

IT IS encouraging to see more being done to bring empty properties back into use (Full House, May 8). A government which has made the promotion of social justice a priority must surely recognise the scandal of derelict houses while families remain homeless.

During Action on Empty Homes Week, perhaps John Prescott will reflect on the fact that the Government's proposed widening of the North Circular road between Bounds Green and Green Lanes in North London would mean the demolition of 250 homes. Spending £204 million of public money to flatten much needed housing for a bigger road to carry even more traffic is senseless. Abandoning such outdated road schemes would go a long way to signalling his commitment to a transport policy which puts communities before the car. Quentin Given, Friends of the Earth, Tottenham and Wood Green.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address and day-time telephone number. We may edit letters. The Country Diary is on page 10.

DNA database would finger serial killers — and us

YOUR Leader (May 6) underestimates the potential civil liberties implications of a DNA database. For it to have any practical application, it will require each sample to be matched with both the identity and whereabouts of each individual subject — it's no use having the data if you can't find your man (or woman). And then each subject will have to provide some form of documentary evidence to prove that they have provided a sample of DNA and to verify their identity and place of residence. What Peter Gammon of the Superintendents' Association is advocating is a form of national identity card. The social tagging of millions of innocent people, Mr Gammon? Remember what happened last time that was tried during the poll tax debacle? David Northmore, London.

YOU claim that the creation of a national DNA database would be wrong in principle because it would make suspects of us all. If that were the case, then you should start campaigning against the vehicle licence database in Swansea because when we pay our licences, the details are taken and can be accessed by the police whenever they need to check a number plate. I, like most people, accept the value of this. I would feel the same about a DNA database, which could be built up incidentally to access to the NHS.

DNA identification would be particularly useful in cases of serial killings. These are relatively few in number, but are predominantly carried out by men on women. Currently the tagging of millions of innocent people, Mr Gammon? Remember what happened last time that was tried during the poll tax debacle? David Northmore, London.

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Why Noam Chomsky is our hero for the nineties

HUGO Young claims Noam Chomsky is "rooted in the past" (Comment, May 7), citing the cases of Guatemala and Cuba in the 1950s and 1960s. But he omits any mention of Chomsky's analysis, for example, of the Mexican debt crisis; deregulation and the impact of capital mobility (as being witnessed in Asia); the shift in US foreign and economic policy with the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act which went before the US Senate last month; or declining labour terms and conditions in the US and UK. Do these not

constitute Hugo Young's "real world of the 1990s"? A J Ayers, Hove, Sussex.

CHOMSKY reflects a totally different experience than that assumed by Hugo Young — the experience of US domination still suffered by the majority of humanity. Bolivian campesinos who are fighting off the "advisers" from the US Drug Enforcement Agency trying to destroy their livelihoods; Bishop Genevieve's murder on April 26 for reporting the US-funded massacres in

Guatemala; Colombia racked by the violence spawned by US-trained death squads; the people of Mexico impoverished through a "free trade" agreement imposed by the US; Indonesians who have suffered the Suharto regime whose bloody coup was initiated, armed and trained by the US and Britain. Andy Higginbottom, London.

CANNOT believe Hugo Young is not aware of the importance of Chomsky's analyses in underpinning J K Gal-

braith's thesis that the cosy links between governments, industrial and financial conglomerates have encouraged the development of an economic orthodoxy which ignores the most important problems facing humanity. Nor can I believe that he is unaware of the cogent arguments that the trend towards fewer and fewer workers producing enormous quantities of consumer goods of increasingly marginal utility is an inevitable consequence of the acceptance of these orthodoxies. The economic chal-

lenge of the millennium is to solve the problem of how, although we can produce the goods required to enable a large proportion of the earth's population to have a decent standard of living, we are only able to distribute incomes in such a way as to deny many of them access to the necessities of life. As long as we devote far more resources to developing a replacement for Compact Disc or a new formula for a TV sitcom than to the serious inequalities in society, Chomsky will continue to command my admiration. Norman Jones, Manchester.

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Bebe Rebozo

Nixon's best man

CHARLES G "Bebe" Rebozo, who has died aged 66, was a poor Cuban immigrant's son turned loan shark and then banker. He was also the closest friend of President Richard Nixon and perhaps as close to him as any male friend to a president of the United States in the 20th century. Rebozo comforted Nixon, advised him, mixed Martinis for him, arranged for him to make money on real estate deals, and remained loyal to him until the last.

Rebozo was the ninth son of an immigrant cigar-maker in Miami, where he went to school with "Gorgeous George" Snodgrass, later a United States senator and a favourite girl-chasing friend of President Kennedy. He worked as a paperboy, chicken-plucker, garage mechanic and chauffeur before becoming the supplier of beautiful women for Southern parties at the Cocolobo Club. It was said there was little he did not know about what powerful businessmen and politicians did when they came to Florida without their wives.

Beautiful as a young man and with eyes that remained beautiful even after the face had hardened around it, Rebozo married Claire Gumm while still in high school, but the marriage was later annulled. During the war he learned to fly and then to craft from Miami via Brazil to

the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and North Africa. After the war, he persuaded his wife to marry him, but the second marriage lasted little longer than the first.

Rebozo started to invest in real estate and ran two small loan companies with considerable ruthlessness. Courtroom records show them taking children's toys as security for small loans. He was associated with leading figures in organised crime, including "Big Al" Pulizzi, described by the US Bureau of Narcotics as one of the most dangerous criminals in the country.

It would have been difficult, though, in those days, to get on in real estate and banking in Miami without knowing some of the dons of Cosa Nostra. He also made friends with leading politicians, including Lyndon Johnson. He first met Nixon in 1960 and took him deep-sea fishing and on a trip to the Bahamas. In the middle 1960s he was an intermediary in the notorious loan of \$200,000 from Howard Hughes to the Nixon family, and after Nixon's defeat in the 1960 presidential election, the two men became even closer.

In the early 1960s, Nixon began to accumulate shares in Rebozo's real-estate development company, Fisher's Island Inc, at a dollar a share. After he became President in 1969 he sold them back to Rebozo and other investors for two dollars.

This was only the beginning of a financial relationship in which Rebozo and his friend Robert Abplanalp, a pioneer of the aerosol, accumulated secret funds for Nixon's use. Rebozo lent Nixon money to develop his San Clemente home in California, and rented a large house in Bethesda, in the Washington suburbs, to Nixon's daughter Julie and her husband, David Eisenhower.

In early 1973, when the Watergate scandal was breaking, Rebozo assured Nixon, on nancial backer, however. Nixon was able to relax better in Rebozo's company than with anyone else, notably better than with his wife. Rebozo mixed a mean Martini, and there were rumours that, when travelling with Nixon in Hong Kong, he provided Nixon with girls. That is not altogether plausible, however. The inevitable speculations about a homosexual basis to the relations between the two men, at least of any physical kind, are equally implausible.

They did enjoy such adolescent horseplay as pushing each other into swimming pools and it was not unknown for Nixon to sit, completely happy, in Rebozo's company, in total silence, for as long as three hours at a stretch. For 20 years, ever since his decision to attack Senator Joe McCarthy in 1954, Rebozo was at Nixon's side during all the crises of his political career, and would show up, unofficially, on Nixon's foreign trips. He had the run of the White House while Nixon was there, and was a constant visitor after the fall. "Bebe worshipped Nixon," one of Nixon's aides wrote, "and hated his enemies."

He is survived by his wife Jane.

Godfrey Hodgson

Charles G "Bebe" Rebozo, banker, born November 17, 1931; died May 8, 1998.

He was perhaps as close to Nixon as any male friend to a US president in the 20th century

a boat trip on the Potomac, that money could be found to buy the silence of witnesses. In November 1974, when Nixon, discredited by Watergate, was impoverished by the prospect of lawsuits and recovering from major surgery, Rebozo and Abplanalp showed up in California and bought back Nixon's Key Biscayne properties at a profit of \$500,000-\$750,000.

The relationship was much more than the usual one between a politician and his fi-



The fixer... Bebe Rebozo (left) with Richard Nixon

PHOTOGRAPH: CAMERA PRESS

Rupert Chandler

On the city streets

RUPERT Chandler who has died of lung cancer aged 61, never ceased to be appalled by offensive attitudes towards homeless people. And the principle informing his career across two decades with London's Pica-dilly Advice Centre and the Resource Information Service (RIS), was respect.

It was in the 1960s that he worked at the Pica-dilly, a drop-in centre for the young and homeless. Later in that decade he co-founded the RIS. His guiding light is that homeless people have the right to accurate information — so they can make their own choices. The RIS produces the annual *London Hostels Directory*, a unique guide for advice workers and their clients. The RIS has expanded over the past decade, acquiring the ear of government ministers and becoming an impressive success story in a declining voluntary sector. The RIS began by stressing the material causes of homelessness — an absence of good-quality, affordable public housing.

Rupert was born in Greenwich, the son of an engineer and the second oldest of four children. Educated at Sturford Grammar School, he dropped out of teaching training and was a 1970s East End anarchist involved in the claimants union, communal housing, leaving theatre and a radical print shop. And he met Anne, his long-term partner, with whom he had a much-loved son, Alex.

Rupert was a boyish enthusiasm and hung on to his radicalism. His pet hates would provoke hilarious rant and the same Rupertesque catch phrase: "What a state o be in!"

Illness made him more sociable and he remained a bon vivant while Helen, his partner after Anne, became one of his main supports. He died surrounded by family in the broadest sense — Anne, Helen, his father, a sister and friends. It was his son Alex who came up with exactly the right epitaph: "What a state o be in."

Jane Edgerton

Rupert Chandler, homelessness activist, born February 29 1937; died May 4 1998.

Ian McGregor

The art of saving faces

IN the 1960s, Glasgow's regional plastic surgery unit was relocated to Can-niesburn Hospital. That unit gained an international reputation for clinical excellence and training, and at the centre of its dedicated team was Ian McGregor who has died aged 76. Their work was influential worldwide. And this unit still thrives, attracting surgeons from home and abroad.

McGregor was an innovator, a teacher and skilled operator. His book *Fundamental Techniques of Plastic Surgery*, first published in 1960, is now in its ninth edition. And a lifetime's experience of surgery and reconstruction for a devastating disease went into his other major work, *Cancer of the Face and Mouth* (1976) co-written with his pathologist wife Mary. From 1984 to 1986 he served as president of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.

He wrote many articles for plastic surgery journals, notably some in the 1970s which described the axial pattern of blood supply to skin flaps, written with colleagues at Can-niesburn. They came as major advances were being made in microsurgical tissue transfer and the result was a renewed interest in the pattern of blood supply to the skin and underlying muscle. Subsequent developments have had a dramatic effect on the techniques of plastic surgery during the last 20 years, making reconstruction following trauma and cancer treatment quicker and safer.

Born in Glasgow, the son of a monumental mason and a seamstress, Ian McGregor attended North Kelvinside Academy and read medicine at Glasgow University during the war. He served in the Royal Army Medical Corps, in the Middle East and Africa between 1945 and 1948.

Back in Glasgow, he joined the anatomy department



Plastic surgical precision... Ian McGregor

where his interest in plastic surgery began with research on the sympathetic reinnervation of skin grafts and in meeting Jack Tough, a plastic surgeon from the regional plastic surgery unit at Ballochmyle Hospital in Ayrshire.

In those days there was no formal training in the surgical specialties but, unlike many colleagues, he began early in his chosen discipline — working in Glasgow Royal Infirmary's burn unit. He also worked as a registrar in the regional plastic surgery unit before becoming a junior consultant at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, after which was to come Can-niesburn.

An active member of the British Association of Plastic Surgeons, he served on its council in the 1970s, becoming president in 1979. His enthusiasm and far sightedness encouraged this small speciality to press for the establishment of professional chairs in plastic surgery and an exit examination. There

are now four professors of plastic surgery in England and Wales. He received many international honours and awards. As a staunch Scotsman, he was very pleased to be honoured by the Royal College of Surgeons of England by a Hunterian professorship in 1984 and the British Association of Plastic Surgeons also awarded him a Gillies Memorial Medal in 1991.

In retirement he enjoyed reading, music and golf, but continued to lecture. He died after a brief illness, diagnosed shortly after attending his eldest son's inaugural professional lecture at the University of Swansea. His first wife Christine, died when their three sons were teenagers. He is survived by his wife Marian and his sons and will be missed by colleagues and patients.

Philip Sykes

Ian Alexander McGregor, Plastic Surgeon, born June 6, 1921; died April 13, 1998.

Flash Winston

East End bebopper

THE SOMETIME drummer, pianist, stand-up comic, raconteur, master of ceremonies and author "Flash" Winston wrote, in his thus far unpublished memoirs, that "certain new roles cultivated by a pogram-orientated mother and a father leaning toward utopian socialism, inevitably inclined me to a humorous point of view."

Flash Winston was a swing, bird-like Jewish East End musician and entertainer with a shrewd and more analytical angle on the socio-musical phenomenon of the London jazz and nightclub life of the 1940s and 1950s than many of his pragmatic contemporaries.

At the age of 74, he is now no longer with us — or "no longer with anybody" as his one-time close associate and friend, the late Ronnie Scott, would undoubtedly have rather put it.

A humorous point of view Winston certainly had. He coupled it with an energetic enthusiasm for American music, like most of the creative generation of young fans from the East End who would struggle their love of jazz into as many playing situations as they could, from weddings and barmitzvas to West End hotel dance gigs, or schmaltzy Mecca-ballroom tours.

Though Flash Winston occasionally resappeared on jazz stages even into the 1990s, most of his work as a musician and a jazz-club compere occupied the 1940s to the 1960s. Those were years in which younger British performers struggled with the

contradictions between their own creative idiosyncrasies and the then daunting omnipotence of the American jazz scene and its equally captivating unwritten hipster rulebook.

Winston worked nightclubs run by London hoods in the 1940s, including the legendary Jack "Spot" Comer's Modernaires club in Old Compton Street, where he led a band featuring himself on piano in a repertoire of late swing and almost-bebop. The gangsters liked to call "yer heebie jeebie music". Winston loved the mixture of menace and ludicriousness, in these playing situations — at the Modernaires, Jack Spot's office telephone was on a wall in the music-room along with the band and the dancers, and if it rang, Scott would silence the party with a peremptory wave of the hand and they would all have to stand in nervous silence until he was through.

Winston, like his contemporary Ronnie Scott, was a musician who learned fast, and though he wasn't always a first-choice player, he played with energy and wit. When union difficulties ruled out the British prototype drummer Laurie Morgan for one of Benny Goodman's rare British visits, Winston successfully accompanied the fractious clarinet king for a London Palladium season in 1948.

Flash Winston first learned his craft and his attitude, in the Jewish community of Aldgate and the London docklands, and through the musical opportunities offered by the Jewish youth club and barmitzva-party world. But

his significant professional experience began with Jerry Allen's trio at the Prince of Wales Theatre in the early 1940s, with Scottish trumpet-singer Duncan Whyte in 1944, and with Denis Rose — the founding father, guide and guru of the British bebop movement — at the Glider-drome in Lincolnshire.

Winston also played in the Caribbean ensemble of Carl Barribeau, but his social circle was the same as Ronnie Scott's — a group of skilful, inquisitive, circum-spectly rebellious young dance-band players. They loved the new sounds of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, and also the fashions, bebopism, deflationary humour and booby-trapping of bourgeois affections that went with his late-1940s American culture in the heads-down austerity and rationing of postwar Britain.

Winston's and Scott's circle set up the Club Eleven in a tatty Soho rehearsal room in 1950, dedicated to an all-bebop repertoire, and it was a modest modern enthusiast's forerunner of the kind of nightclub Scott eventually became famous for. The Club Eleven closed after a few months following a drugs bust which put almost all the

founders in a police cell pending the next day's judgment. Winston spent the night baiting the constabulary by crawling around on the floor of his cell gasping "water, water". On hearing the magistrate suffered from gout, he suggested they hire a chiropodist rather than a lawyer.

Winston spent much of the 1950s attempting to move from music to stand-up comedy — he even had a most job, he said his mother thought would prohibit him from being buried in a Jewish cemetery — and once persuaded Scott to put him on as an interval act at the newly-founded Ronnie Scott Club in 1958. But, after a good start on the first night, nerves overcame Winston for the second, and the proprietor eventually cancelled him for the third.

Perhaps it was typical of the later stages of Winston's career, though he played drums, piano and sang at a variety of London nightclubs including the Mandrake, the Sunset, and the Sporting Circle.

But the changing character of the nightclub world moved away from Winston, and he devoted much of his mid and later life to writing a voluminous personal reflection on war-time nightlife, politics, Jewishness, family life, gambling and humour that has yet to see the light of day.

John Fordham

Cecil Jacob "Flash" Winston, musician, born September 6 1923; died London, April 15, 1998.

Home truths... Rupert Chandler with his son Alex



Home truths... Rupert Chandler with his son Alex

Birthdays

Burt Bacharach, composer, conductor, 70; Alan Ball, football manager, 53; Paul Burrows, Lib Dem MP, 46; Dominic Cadbury, chairman, Cadbury Schweppes, 56; Ian Dury, rock singer, 56; Susan Hampshire, actress and dyslexic campaigner, 56; Dr Mary Harris, engineer, 45; Nicky Hanson, actor, 53; Michael Ignatieff, broadcaster, writer, 51; Baroness (Helen) Kennedy, QC, barrister and writer, 48; Eric Lyall, chairman, Ford Group, 74; Prof Colin Mayer, management economist, 45; Rt Rev Hugh Montefiore, former Bishop of Birmingham, 78; Jenni Murray, broadcaster, 46; Chris Patten, former governor of Hong Kong, 54; Rosalind Wiseman, director, the Wallace Collection, 47; Godfrey Smith, columnist, 72; Fred Smithies, former teachers' union leader, 69; Dr Miriam Stoppard, physician and broadcaster, 61; Deborah Warner, theatre director, 39; Steve Winwood, rock singer and composer, 50.

Death Notices

BRIDLEY, Charles, 84, died peacefully at home on 6th May, aged 79 after a brief illness. He was born in 1918 and was the son of Henry and Mary. He was married to Mary (nee) Bridley and had three children: David, John and Susan. He was a member of the Church of England and was a past master of the local Freemasons lodge. He was a keen gardener and enjoyed his garden. He was a member of the local cricket club and was a past president of the local tennis club. He was a member of the local golf club and was a past president of the local golf association. He was a member of the local rugby club and was a past president of the local rugby association. He was a member of the local football club and was a past president of the local football association. He was a member of the local hockey club and was a past president of the local hockey association. He was a member of the local basketball club and was a past president of the local basketball association. 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The Sandline affair

Nigerians alone drove out the junta rebels

Ed Loughlin, who witnessed the conflict, says mercenary involvement was minimal

DESPITE lurid reports to the contrary, the pursuit of the civil war in Sierra Leone has had little to do with British mercenaries, illegally imported Bulgarian weapons, Foreign Office intrigue or the crew of HMS Cornwall. Whatever the Government may or may not have known about the activities of the London-based mercenary firm Sandline International, and whatever plans may have been conceived, Major Johnny Paul Koroma's military junta was toppled by nothing more than a few battalions of lightly equipped Nigerian infantry.

Although the troops were officially acting on behalf of the Ecomog west African peace-keeping force, which gave them their mandate, there was no doubt in the minds of the few foreigners present that this was an all-Nigerian show.

For three weeks in February and March, I was one of two western journalists covering the Nigerian advance from Freetown — liberated in mid-February — into the junta-held north. For all the talk of "dogs of war", the only mercenaries involved in the operation were the crew of the old Soviet-built Mi17



Sandline's old Soviet-built transport helicopter delivers Nigerian infantrymen to Bumbuna to defend a dam project against rebel attack

transport helicopter which, together with a semi-operational Hind gunship and a Libyian-based Alpha Jet, constituted the sum total of Ecomog's air support.

It was a photograph of this helicopter being repaired in Freetown by crew members of HMS Cornwall that led the Sunday Times to claim last weekend that it had proved co-operation between the British military and Sandline, which is believed to own the helicopter. What the Sunday Times left out was that the Cornwall had been sent to assist Ecomog and the newly restored elected government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, and that it was for Ecomog and Kabbah that the helicopter was working.

I had plenty of time and opportunity to form this impression. Base for Ecomog operations was Lungi airport, separated from Freetown by a long river ferry crossing, and the comings and goings of the old helicopter was all that broke the monotony of days spent waiting for the northern advance to begin.

The crew — three South Africans and a machine-gunner of indeterminate nationality — were polite but wary; journalists could make life difficult for people in their line of work, particularly at a

time when South Africa's parliament was pushing through legislation to ban mercenary activity by its citizens.

Their main job, it soon became plain, was to ferry the Nigerian force commander and his staff on trips across to Freetown and back to Ecomog headquarters in the Liberian capital of Monrovia.

They also went on a number of supply and rescue missions to the interior, where foreign missionaries and aid workers had been trapped by the unrest and where Sandline employees were still contracted to guard three key installations.

On February 27, after a week of tedium at Lungi, we got lucky. The helicopter was

flying to Bumbuna in the north to evacuate a number of civilians and Catholic missionaries from a dam construction project.

Although surrounded by hostile junta fighters, the Italian-led construction project had escaped the general looting and vandalism because of the presence of Sandline personnel. The Nigerian commander, Colonel Maxwell Khobe, said we could go along if it was all right with the crew. The crew said fine, so long as we did not photograph them.

There followed 40 minutes of high-speed tree-top madness, packed into the cargo hold with boxes of ammunition and supplies and a squad

of nervous Nigerian soldiers being sent to reinforce the Sandline personnel. The gunner, perched in the open doorway with no safety line and a general purpose machine gun in his lap, waved politely to occasional groups of startled civilians as we zoomed over their heads.

At Bumbuna the helicopter swooped in low over the hills above the dam site, a miracle of calm and order after the eerie emptiness and unharvested fields of the rebel-held countryside. The Nigerian soldiers rushed to unload their gear, fearing incoming fire. A gaggle of frightened women and children, relatives of the construction team, climbed on board, together with three unkempt white men carrying Kalashnikov rifles.

I recognised one of them, a wary young man with an English accent, from two weeks before. I had come upon him, together with the helicopter crew, rooting through a stack of captured junta rifles at the Ecomog camp at Koso, south of Freetown, while an indulgent Nigerian quartermaster looked on. Yes, he confirmed on the helicopter after cautious introductions, they had indeed been "shopping" for weapons that day. They got on with the Nigerians very well.

He thought Ecomog was doing a good job, although its organisation and supply was

not always all that it might be.

"They have messed up their logistics pretty badly," he confided. "They have no fuel or trucks for the advance yet, and they don't have their own helicopter. We've had to give them ours."

The Nigerian soldiers who arrived at Bumbuna that day were the first they had seen, he said.

Sandline is also reported to have security contracts at the US-owned Sierra Rutile mine in the south and a diamond concession in the east, but, despite efforts to contact the company in London yesterday, it is not known if they were attacked at any stage. Comprised mostly of former

Robin Cook looks likely to bounce back, despite being light on friends and heading an accident prone department

Michael White and Ian Black

A POLITICIAN in trouble quickly finds out who his friends are. Robin Cook is certainly not friendless in either Westminster or Whitehall where his legendary cleverness is widely admired. But mental agility, coupled with an impatience with lesser minds, has left him a little light on friends.

"I expect there's a bit of Schadenfreude around," a

trade union leader ventured cheerfully — and correctly — last night. Pleasure at the discomfort of a colleague may even have reached the Cabinet, as it has certainly reached the West Street tabloids and the Tory front bench, which owes Mr Cook more than one black eye.

As his critics have all repeatedly reminded everyone the Foreign Secretary has made several sticks for his own back. A proclaimed ethical foreign policy was tricky enough without the addi-

tional burden of an unethical private life.

India, Montserrat, Israel, the most self-regarding of Whitehall departments suddenly seemed accident prone. "It's cumulative, isn't it? The damage builds up," one Labour MP conceded last night.

That is part of the drama of politics: however gifted an MP in opposition, no one knows until he becomes a minister how good he will be at dealing with events. Stamina, political flair, luck and

common sense are all needed. Clever people do not automatically have them, indeed their speed may allow them to cut corners. Mr Cook is not lazy, as alleged, but "Mr A4" likes his muzzles on one side of a sheet of A4. That has been the trend for years.

He has also been dealing with another trend, a growing agenda. The simultaneous EU and G8 presidencies, the Europe-Asia summit, the Middle East, not to mention his private problems, all take time. One symptom may be

that he stopped dealing directly with the FO's Africa Department, relying on his Permanent Secretary, Sir John Kerr, as a filter.

Ironically, the FO consensus is that there is more openness under Labour than its Tory predecessors, and a greater sensitivity to public responses officials make, precisely because of Mr Cook's own combative role in exposing the Tory arms to Iraq shambles. Tony Lloyd, the minister in the Sierra Leone affair, is said by one middling

official who answers to him to be "friendly and accessible".

Tories disagree. "Arrogant and opportunist," they report. That does not mean Mr Cook will be dropped, though he has not been one of the stars of Year One and his stock has slipped. It does mean he is more dependent on No 10 for political support and therefore less independent. Last month's speech praising the Blairite "third way" was one such indicator.

But consider the alternative. Can any Labour MP

imagine the threat posed by a backbench Robin Cook as the Government hits far more serious squalls than Sierra Leone in 1999 or 2000. As President Lyndon Johnson said, when asked why he did not sack his poisonous FBI chief, J. Edgar Hoover, "Better to have him inside the tent pissing out, than outside pissing in."

Un-Blairish language, but important. It is possible to imagine Mr Cook being transferred, back to the DTI beat for example, if things con-

tinue to go wrong. It is impossible to unleash his latent left-wing instincts — even the gleeful union leader concedes their merit — on susceptible backbenchers.

So Mr Cook will labour on, and, with luck, bounce back. He will certainly read his nightly red boxes more carefully — and so will his officials.

"You assess everything on its merits, its potential political fallout and take action accordingly," said one diplomat.

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Finance Guardian

Task force chairman quits

Biotech row hits Blair's big idea

Lee Buckingham and Mark Atkinson

THE Government's policy of appointing business leaders to key committees hit new problems yesterday when Keith McCullagh, the controversial founder of British Biotech, stepped down as chairman of a working group on finance for hi-tech companies.

Although Dr McCullagh's departure is said to be voluntary, it is the latest in a series of upsets for Tony Blair's policy of establishing a working partnership between big business and government departments.

The British Bio chief executive is in the eye of a City storm following his decision to sack Andrew Millar, head of clinical research. The group's share price crashed after the credibility of the

group's clinical trials processes came under scrutiny. Sources at the Treasury, which established the working party, said last night the Government was happy that Dr McCullagh would remain a member of the group, which is close to completing its final report. Peter Williams of Oxford Instruments will take over as chairman.

The warring of business leaders ran into trouble from its earliest days when questions were raised about the share options of Lord Simon. The former boss of BP was embroiled so he could shepherd the Government's European and competition policies through the House of Lords. Doubts also surfaced when the insurance group Pruden-

tial was revealed as one of the worst offenders in the pensions mis-selling scandal. Its chief executive, Sir Peter Davis, heads the welfare-to-work task force.

Martha Taylor's role at the task force on tax and benefits was questioned, too, when employees at Barclays Bank, where he is chief executive, staged a series of strikes over issues involving pay and pensions.

British Biotech said Dr McCullagh was going through a very busy time. The company is compiling a detailed document which, it claims, will rebut the most serious charges raised by Dr Millar against its clinical trials methodology.

Although a spokeswoman

denied any shareholder pressure, investors are likely to have made it clear that they want Dr McCullagh's entire efforts concentrated on improving the fortunes of British Biotech.

The McCullagh working group has met leading firms of accountants, banks and venture capitalists since being set up by the Chancellor last year in an effort to find ways of improving hi-tech companies' access to finance.

Although Britain generates much world-class research and development, particularly in hi-tech areas, the Government believes R&D spending lags behind that by main competitors. "A business environment

that encourages the growth of these companies is essential if the UK is to produce the high value-added products needed to compete internationally and generate the skilled employment opportunities which can sustain and improve the UK people's standard of living in a global economy," said the Treasury's Red Book, which spells out in detail proposals contained in the Budget.

Among the measures already in train are changes to the capital gains tax regime, designed to reward entrepreneurs who develop and sell businesses, and new tax breaks to encourage venture capital. Other proposals to encourage investment in R&D are under review.

Notebook

A stitch-up in time saves 11



Edited by Alex Brummer

THOSE who believed that the political stitch-up at the birth of the euro would be a disaster for sterling — pushing it even higher against the currencies of the euro-11 — have been proved totally wrong. Since the euro officially became part of the financial vocabulary in the first weekend of May, the pound has been on a downward spiral and was trading at below 2.90 German marks yesterday against a peak of 3.10 marks in April.

This might, of course, seem just the thing for exporters and come as a blessed relief to the Chancellor, Gordon Brown. But there will be the fear in Threadneedle Street that all of this is a trifle sudden and disorderly. When the bears have a weakening currency in their sights — and the pound seems to be precisely that at present — the ride downwards can be dizzying: ask Eddie George and Norman Lamont.

But why? First, and most importantly, the broad assumption is that UK base rates peaked at 7.25 per cent. This follows the Bank of England's monetary policy committee's decision to leave rates alone last week. The good sense of that move — reportedly because of a switched vote on the MPC by Professor Charles Goodhart — is evident from the latest output data. This suggests that manufacturing — some 20 per cent of the total economy — is in a bad state and was technically in recession over the last two quarters.

Secondly, inflation appears to be in abeyance. The producer prices figures were weaker in April than forecast, dropping 0.2 per cent on an annual rate and down 0.3 per cent quarter on quarter. This partly reflects the impact on the data of nearly a year of strong sterling. There are obvious problems — not least average earnings, pay in the boardrooms and asset price inflation. But overall disinflation, most apparent in oil and commodity prices, appears to be the mood.

The view in the markets is that, even if sterling plunged to DM2.80, the authorities would resist an interest rate increase for fear of causing a new sterling rally. Strictly speaking the MPC is only interested in future inflation. But, as we now know from the minutes, Mr George and his closest MPC associates have not proved to be the monetary hard-liners many predicted.

City fees

TROWING light on the darker recesses of City practice is an admirable objective. So there is much to be grateful for in the Monop-

lies & Mergers Commission decision to explore ways of ensuring that the City's underwriting practices serve all in the marketplace fairly.

The MMC firmly concludes that the current dominant system of fixed underwriting commissions, for the lead underwriter, the brokers and the sub-underwriters constitutes a "complex monopoly". This does not necessarily mean that the system should be torn down. Before moving to another approach, such as the book building which has been used on some privatisation and other new issues, the MMC rightly says three other tests which need to be met.

Three of the most important are: Does the current system operate against the interests of new entrants to the market (the company issuing client) (ie the company issuing client) getting the best deal? Is the whole process sufficiently transparent?

The answer to all three is probably no. The current system almost certainly precludes new and independent houses gaining a fair share of the action, clients probably are not fully aware of the alternatives and therefore need to be much more transparent on how the deals have been constructed and who exactly has received the commissions.

That said and done, the case for tearing up the present system is not cut and dried. As has been seen with the move from quote to order-driven trading on the Stock Exchange — a result of the Fair Trading intervention — the process can operate against the interest of client. It may be more open, but small investors have face higher spreads and big traders higher fees.

Clearly, in the case of the City's underwriting practices, clients need to be aware of the alternatives available, how the system works and who gains. Moreover, there ought to be — as in a tender — an opportunity for some smaller players to be allowed into the lead underwriting circle, providing they have the capital to take the risk.

But if the only result of switching to a tender/book-building system is to ratchet up costs — in the name of fairness — then this may be a complex monopoly which should be allowed to lie.

Political poser

THERE will be some relief at the Treasury that Dr Keith McCullagh, the founder and chief executive of the troubled pharmaceutical group British Biotech, has decided to relinquish his post as chair of the Working Group on the Financing of High Technology Companies.

Dr McCullagh, who has his work cut out in preparing a detailed rebuttal to allegations made by his former head of clinical trials, Dr Andrew Millar. What has happened to Dr McCullagh is an exception. But a growing number of favoured Labour business ministers are advisers from Lord Simon to Geoffrey Robinson, have found that politics and business are not the perfect mix.

Another Euro bank job row

Mark Millner
Deputy Financial Editor

LITTLE more than a week after settling the bitter row over the presidency of the European Central Bank, France and Germany are set for confrontation over another top banking post.

This time the battle centres on the presidency of the London-based European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The French authorities have already indicated that they would like the job to go to another Frenchman, Philippe Lagayette, but yesterday the German government confirmed it was planning to put its own candidate forward. Bonn has not named a candi-

date officially but news reports suggest finance minister Theo Waigel is backing Horst Köhler, head of the country's savings bank movement. However, there are indications that the EBRD race will not prove as bitter and divisive as the row over the nomination to the top post at the ECB — a dispute only settled by a late compromise which gave the job to the Dutchman Wim Duisenberg on the understanding that he would step down in favour of a French nomination halfway through his eight-year term.

The hint of a softer French line came when Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn suggested that France could be "flexible and open" over the EBRD — but it was over the ECB post.

Springer rights fight



FLEXTECH yesterday won a fiercely fought battle to keep control of exclusive British cable and satellite rights for the Jerry Springer Show — the controversial US talk show on which guests exchange verbal and physical blows egged on by a baying crowd, writes Simon Beavis.

The scramble for the rights seems to have resembled one of the pitched battles Mr Springer delights in overseeing on his ratings-topping series and Flextech is said to have

beaten off a number of bidders, most notably BSkyB.

The deal — which secures the rights from January next year until the show ceases production — could cost Flextech \$5 million a year.

British audiences can already watch the show, which has topped Oprah from its leading position in the ratings, on ITV, as well as on Flextech's Living channel. In a recent Springer weekend, Living attracted more than 5 million viewers — an

11 per cent viewing share — more than five times the channel's normal take.

But enthusiasm for the programme in Britain is waxing just as American channels are growing weary of it — or at least of the allegations that many of the confrontations on the show are elaborately staged.

Last month the show was dropped, with three months to run on its contract, by Chicago station WMAQ, because of viewers' complaints.

Nevertheless, Flextech expressed delight at renewing the rights last night. Managing director Brent Harman said: "Jerry Springer is a television phenomenon and has proved to be a huge success for Living. The success of the show is evident by the fierceness of the competition for these rights."

He said the show would allow Living to build up new subscribers and advertising revenues.

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: ADELE HODGE

Rogue trader costs Sumitomo record pay-out

Dan Atkinson

TRADING giant Sumitomo is to pay British regulators a record \$5 million in settlement for the havoc wreaked on London metal markets by its rogue copper trader Yasuo Hamanaka. Although the payment is dwarfed by the \$78 million Sumitomo is paying in the US, authorities in the UK said it was the best deal they could cut under the present rules.

Last week Alistair Darling, chief secretary of the Treasury, announced that, in future, companies such as Sumitomo could face unlimited fines for alleged wrongdoing

in the City. But given the constraints of the present set-up, the settlement was "a great triumph for us", according to a regulatory source.

Simultaneously with the \$5 million settlement with the new City regulator, the Financial Services Authority (FSA), Sumitomo agreed a \$125 million settlement (about \$78 million) with America's Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), with a further \$25 million set aside for possible action by private parties in the US courts.

Technically, the FSA payment is not a fine, because Sumitomo is not a regulated company in the UK, although the payment is bound to be

compared to the record fine of \$2 million with \$1 million costs levied on Morgan Grenfell in 1997 by the Investment Supervisory Imro for management failures in relation to deals involving maverick fund manager Peter Young.

The \$5 million is a settlement — which will be paid into the FSA's coffers — in return for which the FSA has agreed not to exercise two existing powers against Sumitomo — to bar Sumitomo from becoming a regulated City firm and to go to court for "restitution".

This is the process by which all the parties to Hamanaka's deals would be restored to their original positions.

Seeking restitution would have been a legal nightmare, according to the regulatory source, entailing working out the copper price had Hamanaka not tried to rig the market.

Hamanaka's rogue trading in the copper market threatened the very existence of Sumitomo — for whom the total cost was \$2.6 billion — and sent world metal exchanges into turmoil when it was uncovered in June 1996. His activities embroiled in scandal the London Metal Exchange (LME), through which he carried out many of his deals.

The discovery of Sumitomo's enormous losses set alarm bells ringing about

commodities regulation and caused the price of a tonne of the red metal to plunge in one month from \$2,600 to \$1,750.

In March this year, a judge in Japan sentenced Hamanaka to eight years in prison, describing his 11 years of rogue trading as amounting to "a vicious, complex crime".

British regulators looked at Hamanaka-related activity three times before the 1996 debacle — in 1991, 1993 and 1995 — and launched a fourth investigation in 1996.

The FSA settlement does not prevent any private party from suing Sumitomo. Sumitomo's settlements with both the CFTC and the FSA were made on the basis that the

company is neither "admitting nor denying any of the allegations stemming from the copper trading incident".

The FSA said yesterday that it had decided "no purpose would be served by further consideration of possible use of ... [our] enforcement powers against Sumitomo in relation to Hamanaka ... the FSA recognises that Sumitomo has given prompt, valuable and extensive co-operation following Hamanaka's confession in June 1996."

The settlement does not rule out regulatory action against any third parties in the City alleged to have been involved in the copper-trading scandal.

Thomson investors reap 15pc paper profit

Tony May

THE army of small investors who applied for a stake in Thomson Travel made an instant 15 per cent paper profit yesterday as shares in the UK's biggest tour operator started trading at a premium to the 170p flotation price.

The shares surged 24p to 194p valuing Thomson at \$1.7 billion. A rush for the shares by 500,000 small investors made the flotation the most popular since the utilities were privatised in the 1980s.

It forced Thomson to increase the number of

shares allotted to the public from the 10 per cent of the issue originally planned to 17 per cent.

These investors have each been allotted \$500 worth of shares, but they will not be able to trade their stocks until share certificates are issued for full trading next Monday.

Analysis estimated that the offer was more than three times oversubscribed by the public. Justin Urquhart-Stewart, business planning director at Barclays Stockbrokers, which was one of the share shops behind the float, said: "We planned for 100,000 applications and we got 300,000."

Thomson Travel chief executive Paul Brett said: "We had to achieve a balance between private investors and institutional investors. The retail offer was five times oversubscribed. That's why we pushed it up as high as we could."

One reason for the success of the issue was the 10 per cent holiday discount on offer to shareholders in the so-called Founders' Club.

The discount ends if the shares are sold, making it likely that shareholders will retain the shares. Despite the surge in the group's share price, Mr Urquhart-Stewart advised in-

vestors to stick with the shares for about two years.

He said: "While it goes against my trade as a stockbroker, my advice is to hold on to these shares. Stick them under the mattress or, if you are a high rate taxpayer, put them in a PEP."

Thomson moved to end an outcry from those — Mr Brett estimates them at "a few thousand" — who applied for shares but missed the deadline.

The company is setting up a low-cost share-dealing service for people to buy shares at the market price and said that those who missed the float will still be granted honorary member-

ship of the Founders' Club if they buy in before the end of the year.

Many frustrated investors said that despite having registered their interest in the shares on time, they did not receive application forms until after last Thursday's deadline for returning them.

Share shops have blamed the short period of time between the deadlines for registration and application. They also blamed the postal system.

The City watchdog, the Securities and Futures Authority, is reported to be questioning the share shops on their efficiency in handling the flotation.

Thomson Travel

Shareholders

Members of public: 17% Institutional investors: 82.2%

Value: £1.7bn

Thomson Family: 19% through Woodbridge

Employees can also apply for shares worth 10 per cent of their wages

● A sales assistant with Lunn - Poly earning £9,000 a year would be offered £900 of shares options

● A Britannia Airways pilot on £80,000 would stand to gain £8,000 of stock

TOURIST RATES - BANK SETS			
Australia 2.223	Germany 2.819	Malaysia 8.40	Singapore 2.59
Austria 19.81	Greece 493.48	Malta 0.823	South Africa 6.96
Belgium 58.09	Hong Kong 12.33	Netherlands 3.161	Spain 237.81
Canada 2.296	India 65.10	Norway 1.121	Sweden 12.17
Cyprus 0.831	Ireland 1.121	Portugal 267.79	Switzerland 2.882
Denmark 10.79	Israel 5.02	Saudi Arabia 6.04	Turkey 325.050
Finland 8.645	Italy 5.792		USA 1.600
France 6.428			

Source: Bank of England (excluding rupee, shilling and maldivian)

Tennis

Henman is finding his feet on clay

Stephen Bierley
sees Britain's No. 2
sprint home in Rome
as Rusedski slides

This simplistic conclusion to be drawn from British results yesterday in the first round of the Italian Open was that Greg Rusedski is not one particle of clay nearer to fathom the mysteries of the red dirt whereas Tim Henman is learning fast.

Rusedski, ranked No. 5 in the world but scarcely in the top 100 on clay, lost 7-5, 7-6, 6-0 in the semi-finals of the Czech Republic, ranked No. 60, but Henman defeated France's Fabrice Santoro 6-1, 6-0.

Just under three weeks ago Santoro pummeled the world No. 1 Pete Sampras 6-1, 6-1 in Monte Carlo. That particular performance by Sampras was about on the same level as yesterday's effort, or rather lack of it, by the Frenchman.

This is not to decry the quality of Henman's play. He served well, constructed his rallies carefully and intelligently, and seized on Santoro's mistakes with zeal. But his opponent, particularly in the second set, was barely interested and regularly gazed into the crowd as if to make the point.

The world was out that last week, having reached the quarter-finals in Hamburg, where he had to play three matches in quick succession because of the bad weather.

At one point in the second set, when Henman drilled a drive-volley into Santoro's body, the Frenchman ranked No. 27 in the world spat his contempt and was spoken to by the umpire.

Understandably Henman was delighted with this conclusive victory, his best on clay. The British No. 2 had looked all at sea in Monte Carlo, where he lost in the first round, and in Munich, where he went out in the second, but last week in Hamburg he felt altogether more confident.

Even though he lost in the second round to Morocco's mercurial Mohamed El Aghaj yesterday he beat the Czech No. 2 Petr Korda 6-2, 6-4, Henman now believes the

long hours of practice are at last paying dividends. "I had a real sense of purpose against Arzi, although on the day he was better than me," said Henman yesterday. "I've been very realistic about my chances on clay, which has taken the pressure off me. But today's win was a very, very good one."

Henman next plays the winner of today's match between Chile's Marcelo Rios, the world No. 3 who beat him 6-2, 4-6, 6-0 in the semi-finals of the Lipton Championships in March, and the Italian wildcard entry Marco Martinelli. Since Key Biscayne, where he briefly became the No. 1, Rios has played only one match because of an elbow injury.

Rusedski began the clay season in high spirits but in four outings has managed only one win, against Spain's Emilio Alvarez in Hamburg last week.

And is he downhearted? Apparently not. "It's not a big deal losing today," said the British No. 1. "I have been hitting the ball really well in practice and it's just one or two points here and there preventing me winning."

Rusedski should indeed have been Ullrich, having held a 5-3 lead in a disjointed first set with his serve to follow. "It was a very big game," he admitted.

Unfortunately his problems were largely self-inflicted, with a couple of double faults. Worse was to follow at 5-5 when he lost his serve again, this time to love.

Rusedski fought back obstinately in the second set but failed to take any of his three set points, two in the tie-break. "When I needed to raise my game another level, I just couldn't."

In truth, Rusedski's and Henman's relative clay-court prowess will be properly gauged at Roland Garros in two weeks' time. Henman has never won a match at the French Open; Rusedski has won three and lost three. But yesterday Henman had the greater reason to be pleased.

"Thomas Muster, a man who has nothing to learn on clay and has twice won the title here, again made reports of his thirty-something decline look greatly exaggerated by crushing Marcelo Riolli of Uruguay 7-5, 7-6, 6-4, while the American Todd Martin came back strongly to beat the Spaniard Alberto Portes 5-7, 7-6, 6-4.



First down... Jennifer Capriati falls to a straight-sets defeat in Berlin yesterday

GSS, ANDREAS ALTWEIN

Capriati surrenders and runs

Richard Jago in Berlin

JENNIFER CAPRIATI hurried away from the venue here before she could be called for interview yesterday after a first-round defeat which put a large question mark next to her commitment and ability to make another comeback.

The American seemed in almost as much of a hurry to quit the court in the last four fruitful games of a 6-3, 6-1 defeat by German teenager Tamasz Kovacs, during which the 20-year-old former Olympic champion seemed unable to recover from one or two

touches of bad luck, or at least what she rated bad calls.

Capriati's career has several times been close to the precipice after problems which led to convictions for drug possession and shoplifting. But she won sympathy for her latest attempt to drag herself up, and generated hope 10 days ago with a credible quarter-final display against Martina Hingis in Hamburg.

Now, however, an umpire's overrule to the baseline judge's signal of "in" to her backhand drive brought a limp service game which caused her to go 6-3 down, and a similar overrule at 1-1 and deuce in the second set

triggered a double-fault, another break of serve and a calamitous collapse.

Capriati's mind seemed gone. She served two successive double-faults to start her next service game, and was soon hitting ground strokes so flat and fast that they needed to defy the laws of geometry to land in.

"I didn't move as well as I expected or would have wanted," Capriati admitted later — by phone — though she claimed it had been "a good match". She added: "I am not the happiest but there was nothing I can do about that. I was a little fatigued from the qualifying matches."

If so, that is remarkable. Capriati played only three sets in two qualifiers because one opponent quit after only 10 games. There is a prospect now of many more qualifying struggles because five of the six wild cards to which she is entitled have already been used. Next month's Wimbledon may be her last direct acceptance for quite a while.

Two weeks before defending her French Open title, Iva Majoli beat France's Anne-Gaëlle Sidot 6-3, 6-2 and moved to within one win of a likely quarter-final with Hingis. The Croat's win over Hingis in the 1997 Roland Garros final was arguably the upset of last year.

York Jackpot card with form guide

CHRIS HAWKINS	TOP FAVORITE
2.05 Crystal Falls	Crystal Falls
2.10 Crystal Falls (alt)	Crystal Falls
2.10 Crystal Falls (alt)	Crystal Falls
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2.05 YORKSHIRE LIFE HANDBICAP	CH4
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2.35 SHEPHERD TRUPHY RATED HANDBICAP	CH4
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3.10 TATTERSALLS BUSHDOCK STAKES	CH4
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4.10 E.F. NOVICE FILLES STAKES	CH4
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4.40 WORLD OF RACING EXHIBITION CONDITIONS STAKES	CH4
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5.25 LAZY PUNTERS BLACK BOOK HANDICAP CHASE	CH4
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5.55 LAZY PUNTERS BLACK BOOK CONDITIONAL NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE	CH4
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3.40 GULBETH OFFER RATED HANDBICAP (SHOWCASE RACE)	CH4
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4.10 E.F. NOVICE FILLES STAKES	CH4
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4.40 WORLD OF RACING EXHIBITION CONDITIONS STAKES	CH4
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5.25 LAZY PUNTERS BLACK BOOK HANDICAP CHASE	CH4
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5.55 LAZY PUNTERS BLACK BOOK CONDITIONAL NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE	CH4
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5.55 LAZY PUNTERS BLACK BOOK CONDITIONAL NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE	CH4
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Hereford National Hunt programme

CHRIS HAWKINS	TOP FAVORITE
1.50 Island Sanctuary	Island Sanctuary
1.50 Island Sanctuary	Island Sanctuary
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1.50 BATTLE BREAK NOVICE HURDLE	CH4
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2.20 WOLMER SELLING HURDLE	CH4
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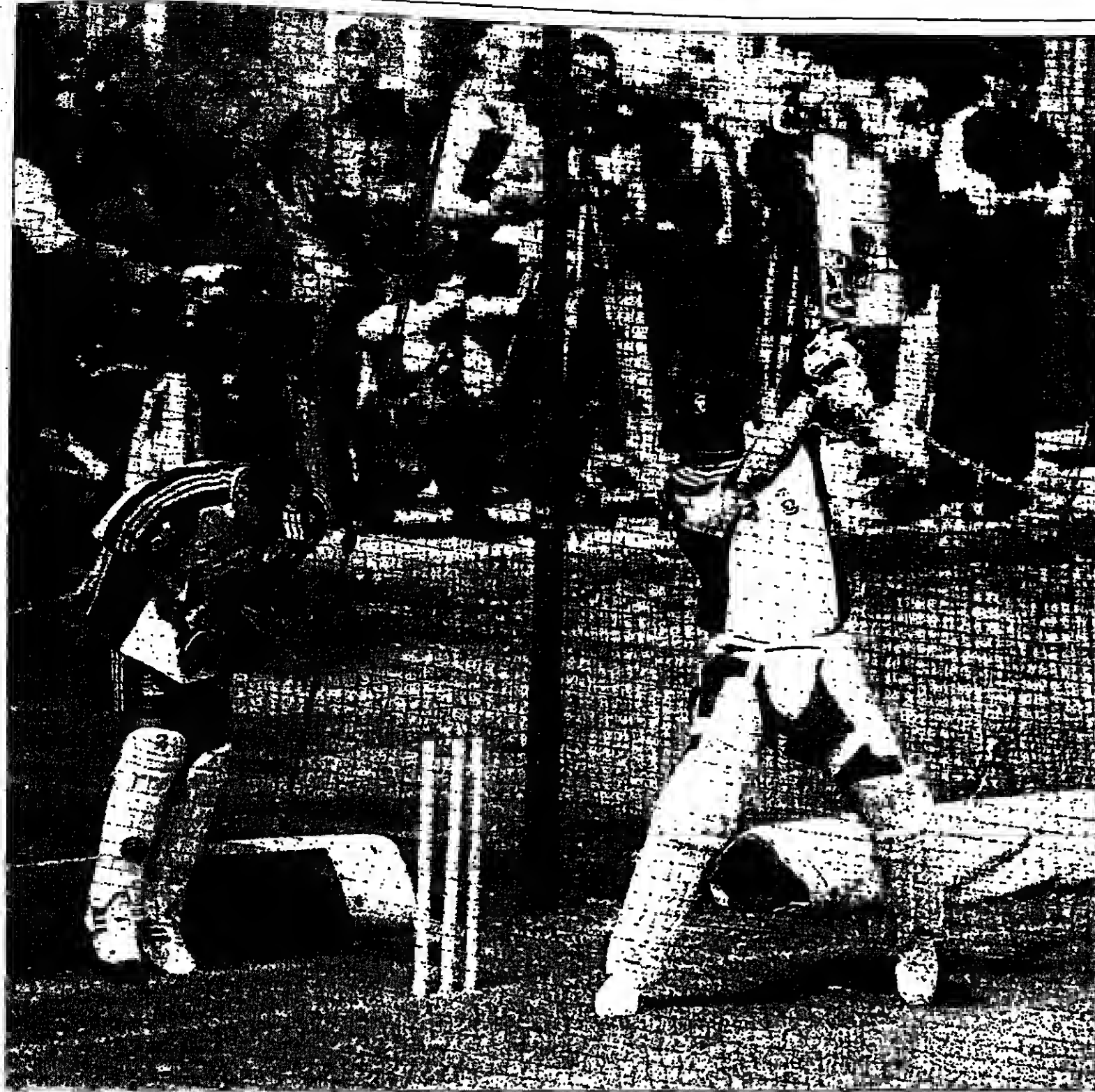
2.55 LAZY PUNTERS BLACK BOOK HANDICAP CHASE	CH4
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3.25 LAZY PUNTERS BLACK BOOK CONDITIONAL NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE	CH4
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3.55 AMB GROUP CLASS PHS SYNDICATE HANDICAP HURDLE	CH4
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4.40 FIVE STARS & ARDLEIGH CHAIRMAN	CH4
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5.55 LAZY PUNTERS BLACK BOOK CONDITIONAL NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE	CH4
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Playing to the crowd... the South African all-rounder Shaun Pollock (right) acclimatises in the Lord's nets yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK BARON

Cricket

Tourists banking on Pollock genes

Rob Steen hears arriving South Africans brandish a new threat under an old name

WHEN the South Africans were presented to the press at Lord's in 1965 the word on everyone's lips was Pollocks. To wit Graeme and Peter, batting prodigy and ferocious fast bowler, who proceeded to beat England pretty much on their own.

In the England and Wales Cricket Board conference room yesterday, Bob Woolmer warned that another Pollock had it in him to do the job on his tod.

"He's one of the best all-rounders since Garry Sobers," asserted the South Africa coach, alluding to Shaun Pollock, Peter's gawky, carrot-haired son. Was Woolmer really bracketing him with the likes of Botham, Ian and Kapil Dev? "He's in that class, certainly. He's fortunate to have his father and uncle's genes. I've seen him destroy attacks and bowl out the best batting side in the world, Australia."

"He's a class batsman. You watch him and you think, 'Blimey, this guy can bat at four', but we keep him at seven because he opens the

bowling. He's not the worst fielder either. He wants to get into the slips but he's got too good an arm."

"It'd be nice to see him and Allan (Donald) fire together for a change," Woolmer added, alluding to the fact that the new-ball pair rarely seem to be fit at the same time. "Shaun learned a lot in his summer at Warwickshire. He got a quality away-swinging going; he knows what length to bowl here."

Hansie Cronje, a captain whose diplomacy would go down a treat with Lord MacLaurin — even if he was wearing a tracksuit top — made all the right noises. Yes, he and his compatriots had endured a strenuous winter — 11 Tests and more than twice as many one-day internationals in six months — but a recent 17-day furlough should have replenished the stocks. Yes, he'd seen snatches of England's Caribbean venture but it would be foolish to write them off.

"Yes, he expected Mike Atherton to open in the Tests but 'no, we don't mind'."

There was a touch of serendipity when attention turned

to Makhaya Ntini and Roger Telemachus, the black fast bowlers whose inclusion has been held up by South African whites as an example of excessive positive discrimination; at the time, the two young men were frolicking with a rugby ball at the Nursery End.

In the light of the Louis Luyt affair, wondered a television reporter addressing to one in particular, did South African cricket now feel an even greater responsibility to further the cause of multi-racial sport? Woolmer leapt in. "The word used in South Africa is non-racial," he stressed, clearly at pains to disguise his irritation. "They're very fine players in their own right." Cronje picked up the baton. "Ntini and Telemachus are a great example to their generation, role models for the youth of South Africa. It's not a case of picking a guy for his colour."

In one sense, colour may be precisely what the tourists lack. Donald apart, there are no marquee names, which may explain yesterday's announcement that, whereas Thursday week's opening Texaco Trophy game at The Oval has been sold out since January, tickets remain for both halves of the Roses double-header at Old Trafford and Headingley.

Players renew call for two-tier championship

David Hopps

THE groundswell of support for a two-divisional championship became increasingly evident yesterday when the Professional Cricketers' Association enthusiastically supported such a modernisation of the first-class game at an emergency general meeting at Edgbaston.

Proposals for two divisions, with promotion and relegation, received two-thirds support from England's first-class players last September, only for the counties to vote to maintain the status quo for a further three years.

Since then the players' enthusiasm for a more competitive, if perilous, county structure has hardened. With some postal votes still to be counted, about 80 per cent of players had voted in favour.

To suggest that there is militancy in the air might be overdoing it, but England's first-class cricketers, once

famously described as the only body more fight-willing than their employers, have at least abandoned serfdom.

The PCA voted by an even greater majority for the abolition of the List A & List 2 registration system. This limitation, clearly open to legal challenge, restricts counties to two contested transfers in any five-year period.

Their proposal is a rational alternative to an all-out transfer system, namely that players aged 26 or over should be granted freedom of movement at the end of their contracts, so guaranteeing that counties received some reward for the development of players.

Counties voted 12-7 in September to retain the championship structure for a further three years, but some claimed they did so only because of a lack of detail about financial safeguards. Lord MacLaurin, the ECB chairman, who vacillated before campaigning for two divisions, might be tempted to a renewed campaign.

The PCA executive now has the mandate to discuss its proposals with ECB officials. Matthew Fleming, the players' secretary, said: "We are both heading in roughly the same direction, but we seem to be going slightly faster and slightly further than the board might expect."

Fleming also voiced the PCA's desire to take some decisions about player welfare without always having to ask the board's permission first. Additional revenue would be used to train members for alternative employment and to set up a benevolent fund.

David Graveney, whose position in the PCA has been upgraded to general secretary, said: "This is very close to our hearts, particularly after the death of David Bairstow. We were helpless to act."

Bairstow, the former England and Yorkshire wicket-keeper, was found hanged at his home in January after becoming depressed at a succession of personal, financial and health problems.

Cup draw doubles The Oval interest

SURREY's home tie with Lancashire in the Benson and Hedges Cup is the highlight of the quarter-final draw made yesterday which led to Yorkshire being installed as favourites after their pairing with Durham.

The Oval contest on May 27 will be "like another one-day international" in quality and intensity, according to Surrey's chief executive Paul Sheildon who added: "There could be as many as 20 international players on duty."

Surrey, who host the opening Texaco Trophy international against South Africa on May 21, can expect another lucrative day when the quarter-final takes place less than a week later. Their best modern-day crowd for a knock-out tie is around 7,000 but that figure could be exceeded as the likes of Alec Stewart, Adam Hobbins, Mike Atherton and Wasim Akram do battle.

Kent, Surrey's victims in last summer's B&H Cup final, travel to Leicestershire whose chief executive David Collier hopes their match attracts the television cameras to Grace Road.

Yorkshire's captain David Byas warned his side against complacency after their home draw with Durham, a side they routed by eight wickets in their final group match at Headingley on Saturday.

"On paper they are the least dangerous of the sides left in the competition," said Byas. "But they have knocked over some good teams to get this far, so we'll have to be at our best and make sure that our minds stay on the job."

The other tie is at Lord's between Middlesex and Essex, a repeat of a 2001 match which Mark Ramprakash's side won.

Quarter-final draws: Surrey v Lancashire; Leicestershire v Kent; Yorkshire v Durham; Middlesex v Essex. Matches to be played May 27.

Motor Racing

'Babe' Schumacher linked with Mercedes

Alan Henry

MICHAEL Schumacher's third place in the Spanish Grand Prix, which underlined his status as the greatest Formula One driver since Ayrton Senna, has inevitably fuelled more speculation that he might switch to the McLaren-Mercedes team next season or in 2000.

On the Barcelona circuit which he had anticipated would be one of the worst of the season for the new Ferrari F390, the German double world champion again demonstrated his remarkable ability to squeeze every ounce

of potential from a less-than-competitive car.

Despite Ferrari's hopes of negotiating a long-term contract which would see Schumacher remain with them until the end of his driving career, McLaren and Mercedes seem certain to bid for his services at some point over the next two seasons.

Schumacher, 29, came to prominence as one of the Mercedes-Benz "babas", with Heinz-Harald Frentzen and Karl Wendlinger, he was one of a group of promising young Germans who made their names driving for the Mercedes sportscar racing team in the early 1990s.

Clearly Mercedes would

like nothing more than to have the best German driver in F1 history carrying its colours into battle when its engines are powering the best cars in the business.

Schumacher is believed to have a release clause which allows him to leave Ferrari at the end of this season, a year before the end of his current contract, but only if he fails to finish among the top three in the drivers' championship. On what we have seen so far this season he is almost certain to manage at least third and might therefore stay with Ferrari for 1999.

If that proves to be the case, expect his move to McLaren-Mercedes to follow in 2000, as

summing of course that the cars keep their performance edge. Such timing would guarantee Mercedes the media limelight at a time when its key rival BMW will be starting a new engine partnership with Williams.

What Schumacher's arrival might mean for McLaren's current drivers Mika Hakkinen and David Coulthard first and second respectively at the Circuit de Catalunya on Sunday — continues to be a subject of frenzied debate in F1 circles. Many observers feel that Coulthard might be vulnerable in such circumstances, but McLaren insiders believe Hakkinen would be likely to choose to leave

rather than pair up with a new driver with such a reputation for dominating the teams for whom he drives.

Elsewhere, rumours abound that Michael's younger brother Ralf may leave Jordan-Mugen-Roads at the end of the season. The brothers' business manager Willi Weber is currently exploring the possibility of signing him a seat in the 1999 Williams F1 line-up, possibly at the expense of Frentzen, the man who took Damon Hill's drive at the end of 1996.

"Ralf's option comes up for review in September," said Jordan's commercial manager Ian Phillips, "but I know nothing about these stories."

Sport in brief

Ice Hockey

The Ayr Scottish Eagles and the Manchester Storm experienced contrasting fortunes when the draw was made yesterday for next season's European League qualifying round groupings, to be played on a home-and-away basis in September-December, writes Vic Batchelder.

Storm, the EHL's only wild-card entry, are in Division D with lives Tampere of Finland and the Swedish side Leksands and the Italian champions Bolzano while Ayr, the Scottish League champions, face a stiffer schedule in Division F. In their first experience of European competition they play the Russian

Hockey

The world's outstanding woman player and the best team are in action when Alison Amman plays for Australia against England at Milton Keynes today and Thursday, writes Pat Rowley.

England's women also play New Zealand there on both days.

Snooker

A leading player is understood to have tested positive for marijuana but the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association said last night: "No disciplinary action can be commenced until both samples taken at any test have proved positive." It was

Sailing

Princess Anne named the first of the new boats for the 2000 BT Global Challenge, a 72-footer designed by Rob Humphreys, in Hamble yesterday, writes Bob Fisher.

Rugby League

Hopes of a record Super League crowd for Friday's top-of-the-table clash between Leeds and Wigan have been dashed by safety officers. The capacity at Headingley, which hosted 40,175 for a league match against Bradford in 1947, will be further cut yesterday from 27,500 to only 18,000.

Sailing

Ill wind may be good for Smith

Bob Fisher

MORE than 180 miles separated the British skippers at the front and near the back of the Whitbread Round the World Race fleet yesterday after Lawrie Smith in Silk Cut lost a further 35 miles in six hours in the morning, but Paul Standbridge in Dennis Connor's Toshiba is entering a light-air zone and some computer predictions are that no more than 10 miles will split the pair in two days' time.

The westerlies that were

helping the boats towards La Rochelle have lightened for the leaders as they approach a high-pressure wall in the eastern North Atlantic. The fleet is spread over 150 miles north to south and where the boats attempt to penetrate the wall will be crucial to the outcome of this eighth leg.

Silk Cut is in the north but good wind was even further north. Meanwhile Toshiba led Merit Cup by 4.4 miles and the overall leader EF Language by 23, with Innovation Kyverner in fourth hoping that her southerly approach would ultimately pay.

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